Service learning at The University of Alabama is reverberating across the state and planet, improving health, education, the environment, economies and more. Service learning combines organized service activities with academic study and thoughtful reflection to enhance students’ understanding of course content while providing them with real-world experience. It also encourages students to move beyond acts of charity and temporary solutions to a deeper analysis of systemic challenges in the world around them.

During the past decade, several service-learning initiatives have changed the face of Alabama. Thanks to FocusFirst (page 28), college students conduct vision screenings at daycare centers and preschools in all 67 counties, and Alabama has become the nation’s leader in diagnosing and addressing eyesight problems in young children. Alabama also leads the nation for growth in qualifying scores on Advanced Placement math, science and English exams, due largely to A+ College Ready. High school students who pass AP exams receive college credit and are three times more likely to earn a college degree than those who don’t pass, according to the College Board. Because many high schoolers are not prepared for AP coursework, University of Alabama students partner with A+ College Ready to offer CollegeFirst (page 16), a summer program with rigorous pre-AP curricula.

Through SaveFirst (page 72), The University of Alabama leads the largest campus-based, free-tax-preparation initiative in the nation. In collaboration with college students across the state, UA students provide free income-tax-preparation services to low-income individuals and families. In 2017, they prepared 9,081 returns, helping clients save more than $3.6 million in commercial tax-preparation fees.

UA students’ work is not limited to Alabama. They distribute water filters in developing countries (page 24), help run a medical clinic in Nicaragua (page 30), take part in conservation efforts in Belize (page 76) and more. During the 2016-17 academic year, 157 UA service-learning courses – representing almost every academic discipline – collaborated with 93 community agencies. Nearly 8,700 students worked on 381 service-learning projects and 542 volunteer projects.

Building a culture of service learning takes organized effort and support from an institution’s administration. Since 2007, UA’s Faculty Fellows in Service Learning Program (page 82) – operated by the Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility – has been giving faculty members the knowledge, tools and resources needed to bring their service-learning ideas to fruition.

In the long term, widespread service learning in higher education could prompt a dramatic cultural shift. Community service activities, carried out in conjunction with course work, encourage students to develop a sense of civic responsibility. They gain the desire and ability to continue making positive contributions long after college. We believe institutions of higher learning should play this critical role in preparing the next generation to serve as effective, engaged and ethical citizens.

This publication highlights just some of the many outstanding initiatives arising from service learning at The University of Alabama. From engineering students designing devices to help children with disabilities be more independent (page 4) to rhetoric students creating an archive for a historically black town in danger of losing its history (page 38), service-learning experiences move students beyond the classroom as they apply their knowledge to solving real problems and begin to shape the future of our state, country and world.
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82 Training faculty to develop service-learning courses
Joe Kabalin leads the only collegiate engineering team that has won NASA's Robotic Mining Competition three years in a row, but that distinction isn't what he'll remember most about his experience with the Alabama Astrobotics team. The University of Alabama senior majoring in mechanical engineering says his most meaningful work was modifying a child's electric vehicle for a preschooler named Justin who has femur-fibula-ulna syndrome. The condition causes abnormalities in the long bones of the arms and legs, so Justin has limited range of motion and struggles with mobility.

Joe Kabalin and other members of the Alabama Astrobotics team modified a child's electric vehicle for Justin who has a condition that limits mobility, and presented it to him the day before his fifth birthday.
Kabalin and three other members of the Astrobotics team presented the vehicle to Justin on April 14, 2017, the day before his fifth birthday. “He can actually play at recess now without having peers or teachers push him around in a stroller,” Kabalin says. “He can have some independence. He’s a very happy, bubbly guy. But you can see he gets frustrated sometimes with his limitations.”

The Alabama Astrobotics team is comprised of 61 UA students majoring in engineering fields as well as disciplines including math, physics, education, business and geology. UA students can earn academic credit for up to two semesters through ECE 491/591 Special Topics: Alabama Astrobotics. The elective is customized for each student, with assignments ranging from mechanical and electrical design to software development, participation in outreach activities and engineering documentation.

Improving space exploration

Each year, the team enters the NASA Robotic Mining Competition, which challenges college-student teams to build robots capable of navigating and excavating soil on Mars. The team won the contest in 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2017, besting 40 to 50 other institutions each year. Judges evaluate robots based on how much soil they can collect and return rock samples to a starting point. The Alabama Astrobotics robot completed the Level 1 challenge faster than any other, and the team was one of only five to advance to Level 2 of the competition.

According to NASA, both contests are helping the agency develop robots that can work alongside independent of astronauts, improving future space exploration.

Outreach at home

While they’re often focused on the extraterrestrial, members of the Alabama Astrobotics team also spend significant time making Earth a better place – by sharing their knowledge and using it to benefit others. To help address a shortage of professionals needed to fill jobs in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields and to introduce kids to careers they might not have considered, team members concentrate outreach efforts on West Alabama children, many of whom attend underfunded schools that struggle to expose kids to STEM-related projects. The team engages children with interactive and hands-on activities through events ranging from “Engineering Days” and career expos to robot demonstrations and a statewide robotics competition for kids in kindergarten through 12th grade.

From 2014 to 2016, the team led weekly STEM activities for third and fourth graders at University Place Elementary School in Tuscaloosa. In Spring 2017, the Alabama Astrobotics team began partnering with the Riser School, which serves young children with cerebral palsy, spina bifida, Down syndrome and other disabilities, as well as their typically developing peers.

Team members assist teachers each week and are working to redesign classroom and playground materials, toys and other items to make them suitable for children with physical limitations.

“We felt it was important to give back to the community in many different ways,” says Annie Hubbard, a freshman from Aurora, Ill., majoring in aerospace engineering and the Astrobotics team’s outreach leader. “It helps us continue to understand that engineering isn’t just trying to win a competition; engineering is bettering the world for everyone.”

In 2016-2017, members of the Alabama Astrobotics team devoted more than 750 hours to boost interest in STEM fields, reaching approximately 10,000 children, parents and teachers. The group has taught STEM-based lessons to third and fourth graders (approximately 125 children) at University Place Elementary over the past three years. In Spring 2017, 15 UA students assisted at the Riser School, working with 45 children and their teachers.

While helping children with activities at the Riser School, UA students note environmental elements that present challenges for those with disabilities and think about ways to improve kids’ mobility and quality of life. One child, for instance, was denied insurance coverage for a wheelchair because she couldn’t get into it by herself, says Rebecca Sedlak, a senior from Montgomery, Ala., majoring in aerospace engineering. Members of the Astrobotics team will design a lift giving her that ability. Other projects include modifying tricycles and swings so children can’t fall off of them and adding cushioning to toys.

Like Kabalin, several members of the Astrobotics team plan to create senior design projects inspired by their work at the Riser School.

At University Place Elementary, UA students have created and implemented lessons, helped teachers present science and math curriculum and led Genius Hour, a program in which kids work in small groups to devise and build new school projects that tie to STEM-related projects. The Astrobotics team also takes its robot to the school so kids can operate it and ask questions.

“I love engineering and think it’s very important to a lot of aspects of life,” says Sedlak, who served as the Astrobotics team’s outreach leader in 2015 and 2016. “Getting to communicate that to kids was especially enjoyable.”

A lot of third graders hate math and science, Sedlak says, and think they’re not smart enough in these areas to have careers in technology. She says she tells the kids she was just like them. “It was cool getting to show them the robot and teach them about simple machines, wheels and pulleys,” Sedlak says. “They start seeing those things in the robot. Soon, they understand how the robot works and they realize engineering is something they can do.”

Brian Rose, assistant principal at University Place Elementary, says the partnership with Alabama Astrobotics gives kids at the school an opportunity to interact with career-minded young people and provides teachers with enrichment activities to support their curriculum.

“The UA students come to our school each week to conduct classroom demonstrations and lessons and explain or model the engineering process,” he says. “They also bring the requisite skill set and level of expertise to enhance our daily instruction while simultaneously serving as role models for the future scientists and mathematicians we are trying to create.”

Working with the kids benefits UA students as well. Sedlak says her outreach experiences virtually erased her fear of public speaking and taught her to effectively explain her work to people without engineering backgrounds. “It really is important that we be able to communicate what we do,” she says, “and that is a struggle for many engineers. I learned to be comfortable doing that and to do it without over-complicating things.”

During Genius Hour, individual kids in groups of three or four often have vastly different ideas about how to complete the same project or tackle one problem, Kabalin says, and UA students have to guide them. “We had to figure out what pieces of each person’s plan to use to create the best overall plan,” he says. “It gave us insight into how we could do this with our own groups now and when we’re on teams in our careers.”

Hubbard says coordinating outreach activities for the Astrobotics team has solidified her desire to work with government entities as an advocate for STEM in education. “Without clear communication, nothing can be done well,” she says. “I enjoy public relations and look forward to where this can take me.”

To learn more about the Alabama Astrobotics Team, contact Dr. Kenneth Ricks, associate professor of electrical and computer engineering and team advisor, at 205-348-9777 or kricks@eng.ua.edu.
DIFFERENT Like Us

Students in ANT 481 Anthropology is Elemental teach elementary schoolers to appreciate cultural diversity by introducing them to a scientific field often reserved for higher education.

BY ERIN MOSLEY

I
n a not-so-far-away land, vibrant creatures adapt with ease to their rapidly morphing environment. Undiscovered clans with unique customs and cultures communicate in a variety of languages. The clans work together, each respectful of the others despite their differences. This world does not exist in a remote jungle, nor is it the fictional construct of a novelist. It is the collaborative creation of third graders in Tuscaloosa, Ala. Every week, University of Alabama students help children at two schools learn about anthropology – broadly defined as the study of human culture – by creating their own. Kids have fun, unaware their activities are part of an anthropological exercise designed by Dr. Christopher Lynn, associate professor of anthropology at UA, with the aim of fostering a generation of socially conscious and sensitive adults who are understanding and receptive of others.

“We are trying to open the world to them,” says Ashley Stewart, an anthropology PhD candidate and instructor of ANT 481 Anthropology is Elemental: Teaching Anthropology in Primary and Secondary Settings. “Just because a culture is different doesn’t make it weird or abnormal.”

In Fall 2016 and Spring 2017, University of Alabama students enrolled in ANT 481 Anthropology is Elemental taught weekly anthropology lessons to third graders at Tuscaloosa Magnet School – Elementary and Arcadia Elementary School. More than 200 children have learned about anthropology from approximately 20 UA students through ANT 481, now in its fifth year.

In classes with the kids, UA students cover the four sub-disciplines of anthropology – cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, linguistic anthropology and archaeology. Lessons include topics such as food, body modification, ethnography, primates, evolution and race. Lynn, a father of triplets enrolled at the Tuscaloosa Magnet Schools, initially wanted to find a way to introduce his children and their peers to the studies of anthropology and evolution, a topic often met with opposition in the deep South. “I never knew what anthropology was until college, so this was an opportunity that I could not pass up,” Lynn says. According to a 2009 study titled Why Science Standards Are Important to a Strong Science Curriculum and How States Measure Up, the United States as a whole has been falling behind other nations in educational benchmarks, particularly science literacy, since the 1980s. The study repeated a review of state science standards conducted in 2000. Each state was assessed on a letter-grade scale in both 2000 and 2009. Alabama received an F in both years, and researchers noted “only Alabama dropped in the score for biological evolution.”

Kelsey Kennedy, a senior from Harvest, Ala., majoring in anthropology, says teaching children about anthropology lifts the veil on a field of study that can seem ambiguous and unclear to those not involved in it. “We can expose the kids to something that is positive,” Kennedy says, “and it doesn’t have to conflict with religion.”

Lynn says lessons help children understand all people are connected, despite racial and cultural differences. Recent exploration of the genome has shown all humans share the same set of genes. “Evolution shows us that biologically, we are not racially divided,” Lynn says. Anthropology examines cultural diversity while proving all humans are fundamentally the same, he continues.

Through the ANT 481 course, anthropology majors learn to translate basic anthropological concepts to a general audience. Before students begin leading lessons at an elementary school, they spend four weeks in training. Each student must lead a minimum of two lessons in a school and serve as a co-teacher during other lessons.

A typical 45-minute session includes a lesson and an activity to solidify it. Kids might spend time developing their own tattoos and tribal markings from body paint during a study on body modification, or they might create their own imaginary species when learning about evolution.

UA students enter information about the lessons they create and lead, along with details about their experiences in the elementary classrooms, into a blog: anthropology.ua.edu/blogs/tmseanthsblog. The blog is public so parents and community partners can see what children are learning. Tammy Barkey, head of the Parent Teacher Association at Tuscaloosa Magnet School – Elementary and a parent of two children who took the anthropology class, says the program is a wonderful way for children to gain exposure to an important field, and it could spark long-term interest. “It’s not uncommon for a child to do more research when the information really clicks,” Barkey says. Because TMSE is a project-based school, teachers encourage research outside the classroom setting.

Recently, Lynn received a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, a New York-based organization dedicated to advancing anthropology throughout the world. With the aid of this grant, Lynn and his students are further developing Anthropology is Elemental so it can expand across Alabama and into other states. Kennedy uploads teaching materials to the program blog, where all lesson plans are free and accessible to instructors who want to teach similar classes. Hannah Tytuš, a senior from Cincinnati majoring in anthropology, manages public relations for the program.

Tytuš says by the time kids reach the end of the program, there’s a shift in their behavior, particularly in the way they treat each other. By studying other cultures, children learn to be empathetic and tolerant, she says. “They really internalize the message that they are supposed to be kind to one another,” she adds. “They are 8 years old and they’re telling each other to look through the eyes of someone else.”

Tytuš says she’s learned children can be an agent for positive change in uncertain times. “Adults have a hard time doing that,” she says. “I now see that children are our most important resource.”

To learn more about Anthropology is Elemental, see anthropologielemental.ua.edu or contact Dr. Christopher Lynn at cdlynn@ua.edu or 205-348-4162 or Ashley Stewart at anstewart1@crimson.ua.edu.
Many children in Tuscaloosa-area schools live in food deserts – places where residents have limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables – according to a study by University of Alabama anthropology professor Dr. David Meek in partnership with Schoolyard Roots, a nonprofit organization that operates school gardens in Tuscaloosa County.

Since its founding by a University of Alabama faculty member in 2010, Schoolyard Roots has partnered with the University and with service-learning classes across disciplines. UA students are the primary source of manpower for Schoolyard Roots, whose mission is to support healthy food choices and empower communities through food – with school gardens, farm stands and educational programs.

UA student Alec Rush worked with Schoolyard Roots as part of UH 120 Let’s Grow and UH 405 Let’s Grow Leaders, Honors College courses in which students teach and facilitate lessons in elementary-school gardens. He says he enjoyed incorporating his biology major into lessons about plants and gardening. “The questions the kids ask are very interesting,” says Rush, a junior from Atlanta. “Biology and science all tie together in the garden, and it’s something I like introducing them to.”

Schoolyard Roots operates school gardens in 10 schools in the Tuscaloosa City School District and the Tuscaloosa County School System. Approximately 3,855 children learn about healthy eating, community gardening and sustainability each year through weekly, garden-based lessons that connect classroom activities to the real world and meet Alabama’s Course of Study guidelines. During the 2016-17 academic year, 192 UA students dedicated 4,554 service hours to the organization. Twelve UA service-learning courses worked with Schoolyard Roots during the 2016-17 academic year. In addition to the two Let’s Grow courses, they include NEW 226 Organic Farming; SP 356 Advanced Grammar and Composition with Dr. Xabier Granja (see page 50); ART 131 3D Design, ART 222 Beginning Sculpture and ART 322/323/422 Advanced Sculpture with Dr. Craig Wedderspoon; NEW 211 Food for Thought with Dr. Catherine Roach; PHL 390 Social Justice in Practice with Dr. Rekha Nath; UH 120 Interpersonal Resiliency; MUS 490 Fund Raising for Nonprofit Organizations; and NHM 485 Supervised Practice in Dietetics Management and Communications.

UA Student Engineers in Action helped build raised garden beds and several other projects in 2016-17. The UA Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility has provided Schoolyard Roots with a full-time post-graduate fellowship and a part-time post-graduate to assist in expanding service-learning initiatives. The Center for Community Based Partnerships and College of Community Health Sciences have supported the creation of Schoolyard Roots’ annual evaluation system and presentations on research findings at national and international conferences.

Sculpture students, led by associate professor Craig Wedderspoon, designed and built benches and storage sheds at multiple school gardens. Brandt Deeds, a senior from Berkeley, Calif., majoring in sculpture, says his ART 322 sculpture class spent about four weeks designing and constructing the garden benches. “It’s very satisfying work,” Deeds says.

Let’s Grow courses

In class at UA, Let’s Grow students learn about experiential education, food systems, child nutrition and the benefits and methods of garden education. They then use this knowledge while teaching and facilitating lessons in elementary-school gardens for three hours each week. UA students also help children operate farm stands where they sell produce from the school gardens.
sell the produce they’ve grown to the community.

UH 405 Let’s Grow Leaders gives UA students an opportunity to continue partnering with Schoolyard Roots in a leadership role.

Harris Bolus, a freshman from Birmingham, Ala., majoring in nutrition, says he enrolled in the UH 120 Let’s Grow class because he was looking for a reason to garden. “I just really love plants – growing and identifying plants – and that ties into nutrition,” says Bolus, who worked with kindergartners through third graders at The Alberta School of Performing Arts.

Bolus says his most memorable moment was when a girl in one of his classes asked if she could eat a cabbage flower. When he told her she could, the child grabbed a handful and ate them. Her classmates followed. “It really got me thinking about how this class has encouraged them to eat vegetables,” Bolus says.

Research by UA faculty and students shows children involved with Schoolyard Roots’ school gardens are statistically more likely to eat vegetables in their school cafeteria or packed in a lunch box. The study also shows the kids make healthier food choices overall, have better plant knowledge, greater interest in learning and are more excited to go to school.

During the 2016-17 school year, 46 UA students dedicated 1,337 hours to working with children through Let’s Grow and Let’s Grow Leaders.

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Organic Farming course
NEW 226 Organic Farming covers the basics of organic farming while addressing questions about organic versus industrial agriculture models in relation to current environmental problems and solutions. Students work with Schoolyard Roots throughout the semester.

“Students are always really excited about this course,” says Rashmi Grace, course instructor and education coordinator for Schoolyard Roots. “Most come with some previous interest in the subject matter, but some are totally new to the field. The course challenges them to think critically about our food system, but is also a venue for learning about and putting into practice the principles of organic farming.”

Lisa Meister, a junior from Manhattan, Ill., double majoring in sculpture and sustainable development through New College, took the organic farming course and built garden sheds as part of a sculpture course. She helped maintain the University Place Elementary School garden and sold food at farmers’ markets through the organic farming course. “We got to see the whole progression and how to manage an entire season worth of crops,” she says.

Meister plans to join the Peace Corps and do work related to agricultural development or sustainability. “It gave me a more hands-on approach to my studies,” she says of the organic farming course. “I learned this is something I would want to do.”

During the 2016-17 school year, 16 NEW 226 Organic Farming students spent 300 hours working on Schoolyard Roots projects.

Lindsay Turner, executive director of Schoolyard Roots, says the nonprofit is expanding its community across the state. “It is our dream to one day have a garden at every school in Alabama,” Turner says. “As we continue to provide resources such as our curriculum to schools statewide, we are thrilled that UA students fuel our programs in Tuscaloosa and enable this growth.”

For more information about UA service-learning opportunities with Schoolyard Roots, contact Lindsay Turner at director@schoolyardroots.org. To learn more about Organic Farming or Let’s Grow courses, contact Rashmi Grace at rashmi@schoolyardroots.org.
Honors students learn about the educational and social benefits of chess while teaching the game to children in Tuscaloosa public schools.

BY ERIN MOSLEY

Twice a week, University of Alabama students teach chess lessons to Tracie Barnes’ class of second graders at Tuscaloosa Magnet Schools – Elementary. Barnes says she has seen improvement in the children’s critical-thinking skills since they started learning the game. “They’ve gotten better at everything from thinking about strategies to getting along with other people. They have good sportsmanship,” Barnes says.

Barnes’ class is one of 12 in which UA students taught once- or twice-weekly chess lessons during the 2016-17 academic year. Through the Every Move Counts initiative and UH 333 Chess in Education course, 90 students worked with approximately 215 children at Tuscaloosa Magnet Schools – Elementary and Middle, Alberta School of Performing Arts, Arcadia Elementary School and Oak Hill School.

Educational research shows chess improves problem-solving and concentration abilities as well as math, reading and English scores. The game also instills life skills such as perseverance, responsibility and planning. Chess is a deep game because the different pieces on the board can work independently and together, says Hayden Martz, a sophomore from Tuscaloosa Magnet Schools – Elementary.

“Children end up working with others they may not have,” says Merrill Flowers, coordinator of Every Move Counts. “It levels the playing field. There is no bias in chess.”

Flowers says the Every Move Counts initiative is popular with both kids and college students. “We’ve seen a lot of success,” she says. “The students love to come back.”

In class at UA, students read about and discuss the academic and social benefits of chess and its emerging role in U.S. education systems. They also develop lesson plans and spend at least two hours each week mentoring and teaching chess to children in nearby schools. Students involved in earlier semesters of the program return as mentors during the 2016-17 academic year. Through the Every Move Counts program, students an ownership stake in the expansion of the program and gives students an ownership stake in the program.

The student-led structure of Every Move Counts facilitates expansion of the program and gives students an ownership stake in the initiative, Flowers says.

“Every year has gotten better and better,” Paxton says. “There are lesson plans, strategies and steps. It’s very organized and very well managed. I hope this continues for a long time to come.”

Every Move Counts is a nationally unique service-learning initiative of the UA Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility. To learn more about the program and course, visit cesr.ua.edu or contact the Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility at cesr@ua.edu or 205-348-6493.

A second grader at Tuscaloosa Magnet Schools – Elementary concentrates on his next move.

Seth Hayes, a freshman from Rockford, Ill., majoring in mathematics, says he joined Every Move Counts because he enjoys chess and was looking forward to sharing his love of the game with kids. “There’s a lot of privilege in being able to pursue higher education, and I’ve learned that it’s important to use your past experiences to help others who may not have the same advantages in life,” Hayes says.

Encouragement and compliments can have a big impact on some children. Hayes says. While playing a child who was despondent, he went over tips he usually gives kids when they are trying to decide on a move. “She eventually made a move that really pressured me in the game,” he says. “When I responded with ‘Wow, that’s a good move,’ her disposition was completely different. She seemed to play with twice the confidence she had before.”

In addition to leading classes in schools, UA students involved in Every Move Counts host a Tuscaloosa-area chess match each fall for children in the program and others in West Alabama to come together and experience competitive play. Students also hold two chess festivals for children who complete a year with the Every Move Counts program at Tuscaloosa Magnet Schools and Alberta School of Performing Arts.

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UA students prepare high schoolers for college-level math, science, English and computer-science courses, helping Alabama lead the nation for growth in qualifying scores on Advanced Placement exams.

BY OLIVIA GRIDER

Makenzie Taylor expected typical classroom activities – taking notes from PowerPoint presentations and completing worksheets – when she signed up for a summer program aimed at preparing her for the Advanced Placement computer-science course at her high school.

What she got through the CollegeFirst program at The University of Alabama was drastically different. “The experience was much more hands-on and engaging,” says the 11th grader at Hillcrest High School in Tuscaloosa. “One major concept we learned was the way a computer processes information. Individually, we had to stand at the front of the computer lab and describe a shape so that everyone else could correctly draw it. The activity gave us an idea of how thorough programmers have to be when giving instructions to the computer.”

Taylor and her classmates also coded their own programs and disassembled and reassembled laptop computers.

In the summer of 2016, 127 high school students were part of CollegeFirst, a nationally unique UA service-learning initiative designed to prepare high schoolers – particularly those from underserved schools – for college-level Advanced Placement courses in biology, calculus, chemistry, computer science and English. Thirty-three University of Alabama students in Tuscaloosa and Birmingham led the high schoolers through three weeks of demanding pre-AP curriculum.

Advanced Placement courses give high school students the opportunity to take college-level courses taught by teachers in their schools. Students who pass AP exams earn college credit.

UA students, who enroll in UH 300/NEW 310 CollegeFirst during Summer Term I, spend an initial week studying educational disparity and creative education-reform efforts and learning to be tutors. During the following three weeks, they work with the high school stu-
Taylor, who hopes to land a job in artificial intelligence, says camaraderie between the high school students and mentors was her favorite aspect of the program. "The college students who taught me were able to make the lesson plans easier to understand," she says. "Because the mentors were closer to my age, it was also easier to relate to them [compared to a typical teacher]. Not only were they dedicated to advancing my understanding of the material, they also aided me in preparing for a career in computer science."

CollegeFirst mentors find the high schoolers inspiring as well. "Getting the chance to be a mentor has truly been an eye-opening experience," says Chelsea Aaron, a sophomore from Oak Grove, Ala., majoring in telecommunications and film and geography. "Seeing the students' progress and enthusiasm throughout the three weeks was absolutely amazing and proves that children want to learn and can be successful if given the opportunity."

In 2008, Alabama ranked 43rd nationally in AP exams taken and 45th in exams passed, according to the College Board. The UA Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility created CollegeFirst in 2010 in partnership with A+ College Ready, a statewide initiative that provides extra test preparation sessions and assistance with AP exam costs. Shortly after it began in 2008, A+ College Ready almost doubled the number of AP courses offered in participating schools and more than doubled the number of students enrolled.

Many of these students, however, were not prepared for AP coursework. CollegeFirst's pre-AP summer curriculum addresses this issue and ensures students are ready for college-level study the first day of the school year.

Due in large part to A+ College Ready, Alabama has led the nation for growth in qualifying scores on Advanced Placement math, science and English exams during the past eight years. After just one year in the A+ College Ready program, 132 Alabama high schools showed an average 105-percent increase in AP qualifying scores – 17 times the national average. A+ College Ready has now expanded into almost half of all Alabama public school systems. The number of AP course takers in Alabama has risen from 5,327 students in 2008 to 27,817 students in 2016.

Students who pass AP exams are three times more likely to earn a college degree than those who do not pass, according to the College Board. All high school students deserve an opportunity to succeed in rigorous, college-level experiences, says Stephen Black, director of the UA Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility. "This initiative recruits successful college students to serve as both tutors and mentors, helping increase the number of high school students who will be ready not only to attend college, but to excel in college," he says.

Jacob McHugh, a senior from Charlotte, N.C., majoring in political science, says working with CollegeFirst was an invaluable experience. "It exposed me to not only the flaws of the U.S. educational system, but also to some potential solutions," he says. "Programs such as CollegeFirst have the potential to make large differences in the lives of students. In the short time I spent as a mentor, I saw students' writing vastly improve, their curiosity expand and their ambitions soar."

McHugh says a high school student told him she had never considered a college major before, but decided during the CollegeFirst program she wants to major in political science. "In moments like these, it becomes perfectly apparent how much of a difference teachers make in the lives of their students," he says.

McHugh plans to earn a law degree and take a position with the federal government, working to shift public policy to benefit underserved communities. "CollegeFirst helped me realize that I have a passion for public-policy solutions, especially in regard to education," McHugh says.

Many UA students say course reading assignments and discussions with the high schoolers changed their views of children living in poor communities. "I used to believe picking up a book and studying was the only thing a child needed to do, but now I understand that there are a thousand more obstacles for a child living in poverty before he or she can even open a book," says Spencer Vaughn, a sophomore from Vestavia Hills, Ala., majoring in accounting.

In addition to helping high schoolers learn academic material, mentors advise them on applying to college and for scholarships and give them tips on the types of courses to take once they arrive on a university campus. Fallon Davis, a 12th grader at Paul W. Bryant High School in Cottondale, Ala., says working with the college students was fun and exciting. "Besides teaching us calculus, they also talked to us about their college experiences so that we could learn from them," Davis says.

Taylor says the knowledge she gained through the CollegeFirst program helped her do exceptionally well in her AP computer-science class and was worth sacrificing three weeks of summer break. "My CollegeFirst experience was one of the best experiences of my summer, and I have no regrets," she says.

To learn more about CollegeFirst, visit cesr.ua.edu or contact CESR at cesr@ua.edu or 205-348-6490.
HEALTHY and READY to LEARN

Through the Tuscaloosa Pre-K Partnership, UA students deliver an array of academic and medical services to preschoolers and their families.

BY OLIVIA GRIDER | PHOTOS BY ELLEN JOHNSON, KELSEY DAUGHERTY AND MADALYNN YOUNG

The premise of the UA/Tuscaloosa Pre-Kindergarten Partnership is that all children deserve to enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn. Through a nationally unique collaboration between The University of Alabama and Tuscaloosa City Schools, the initiative identifies academically at-risk 4-year-olds and provides them and their families with health and education services. UA students are involved in much of this work, which often relates to their studies.

Because many kids in the program have not had access to consistent health care, UA students offer health screenings to its approximately 450 children each year.

Lauren Longobardo, a senior from Raleigh, N.C., majoring in nursing, helped conduct health screenings and education sessions as a service-learning component of the NUR 422 Community Health Nursing course. She says the experience made her appreciate the medical care she has received throughout her life. “I learned how health care is not truly accessible to all socioeconomic groups as well as how to provide patient teaching in a way that ensures the information is understood and retained, even by those of a young age,” she says.

In addition to nursing students, those studying education, social work, music, human development, medicine and more participate in the nine-month, full-day pre-K program, which spans 26 classrooms at 11 schools. During the 2016-17 academic year, seven UA students volunteered in classrooms as academic assistants. Several UA service-learning classes, including SPE 100 Exceptional Lives in Society, partnered with the Tuscaloosa Pre-K Initiative. UA also dedicated 10 federal work-study awards to students who committed to serving a minimum of 10 hours per week in pre-K classrooms during the 2016-2017 school year, bringing the total number of awards to 82 since 2008. The initiative offers broad health services through partnerships with UA’s School of Medicine, Family Medicine Residency and Capstone College of Nursing.

UA nursing and medical students provide free physical examinations, and UA and Shelton State Community College nursing students take vital signs, screen children for anemia and measure levels of cholesterol, lead and glucose in their blood. Capstone College of Nursing students also teach mini-lessons on healthy eating and exercise.

Lucas Urbi, a senior from Williston, N.D., majoring in nursing, says students rotate among stations in order to practice several nursing skills. “I feel prepared as a nurse, having been involved in programs such as these,” he says.

Dr. Paige Johnson, assistant professor of nursing and co-instructor of NUR 422 along with Dr. Michele Montgomery, says helping with pre-K screenings can have a far-reaching impact on future health-care providers. “It is my hope that they will see the health disparities and issues that are prevalent just around the corner from our University,” Johnson says. “I hope that they will understand the importance of primary prevention, health education and health promotion.”

Medical students assist with health screenings as part of their pediatrics clinical rotation, and a resident physician from The University of Alabama Family Medicine Residency attends each screening to check any abnormal health findings and make recommendations for follow-up care.

After each screening, the Tuscaloosa City Schools district sends letters to parents with information about their children’s health and referrals to physicians, dentists and social workers, as needed.

Other health services provided through the UA partnership include hearing screenings and FocusFirst high-tech vision screenings sponsored by the Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility (see article on page 28). Students have screened more than 2,900 pre-K children for vision problems since the program began. Impairments are typically detected in 11 percent of children, all of whom receive free follow-up care.

Education and human development majors and other students also gain real-world experiences to use in their professions. Students assist teachers with daily activities in the pre-K program’s classrooms. UA School of Music and music-education students regularly visit pre-K classrooms to provide introductory musical instruction, and students with the UA Speech and Hearing Center provide speech therapy to children in the program.

Lia Jones, a junior from Greenville, S.C., majoring in management and minoring in communication studies, works in a pre-K classroom for 10 hours each week. She says she often applies what she has learned about verbal and nonverbal communication when observing and interacting with the children. “These kids are developing personalities of their own, and it’s interesting to see what they learn and how they convey it,” she says.

Jones also says her time in the classroom will translate to her career. “The ability to communicate with and work with all kinds of people from different backgrounds is a great tool to have, and working at this school has given me that experience,” she says.

For more information about the UA/Tuscaloosa Pre-K Partnership, contact Lindsey Thomas at lmthomas@ua.edu or 205-348-6491.

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Sociology of HIV/AIDS is a class many students are surprised to see in The University of Alabama course catalog. “The title of the course is what really drew me in,” says Joshua Smith, a senior from Decatur, Ala., majoring in African-American studies.

Smith says the course inspired his decision to focus on infectious diseases in medical school.

HIV has been called the “sociological epidemic” because it often affects those who are poor and marginalized. SOC 360 Sociology of HIV/AIDS works to dissect the social inequalities, history, myths and issues of the disease.

“I can personally say before this course I was very ignorant when it came to HIV/AIDS,” says Sharnelle Anthony, a senior from New Castle, Del., majoring in public relations. “The impact this class has had on me is phenomenal, and I have a much better understanding of the disease physically and socially.”

Students study how the disease is – and isn’t – transmitted, its relationship to same-sex activity, sex work and illicit drug use and its symptoms and treatment. They learn HIV is spread most often through heterosexual contact (on a global basis), and that it is a manageable disease that can affect anyone.

Students use their newfound knowledge to help people in Tuscaloosa County’s parole and probation programs learn about their risks for HIV and get tested. Convicted offenders are a high-risk population for the disease.

In recent years, overcrowding in Alabama prisons has led to the early release of many non-violent offenders to parole and probation programs. Some are sent directly to community corrections programs rather than prison. An unforeseen issue with this transition is that these individuals do not have access to the health education, testing and treatment resources they would have in prison.

To help solve this problem, Dr. Bronwen Lichtenstein, a professor of sociology at UA, partnered with West Alabama AIDS Outreach and the Tuscaloosa County Parole and Probation Office to offer HIV education and testing in the probation/parole office.

“I felt that it was imperative to provide HIV testing for a high-risk population in our area,” Lichtenstein says. “We knew that HIV testing and treatment at probation and parole offices could help to save lives and prevent transmission in the community. We wanted to bring the number down.”

HIV-detection rates in the South are significantly higher than rates in other regions of the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Alabama faces an HIV epidemic of moderate magnitude” compared to other states, and an estimated one in six people living with HIV in Alabama is unaware of his or her infection, per the State of Alabama HIV Surveillance 2014 Report. Tuscaloosa County ranks fifth among Alabama’s 67 counties for infection rates.

Lichtenstein and UA social work doctoral student and Tuscaloosa native Brad Barber, who has been a probation officer in Tuscaloosa County for five years, worked on a pilot project in Fall 2015.

Lichtenstein and Barber divided participants into two groups. The first group was composed of newly sentenced probationers who received HIV education from West Alabama AIDS Outreach personnel at the conclusion of their probation orientation meeting. The second group was comprised of parolees and probationers who were already in the system and had not received HIV education, but were invited to participate in free HIV testing at the probation/parole office.

Thirty percent of people in the first group volunteered for testing, while only 3 percent of the second group volunteered, showing prior HIV education significantly influences willingness to be tested.

The top scholastic journal for AIDS research, the Journal of the International AIDS Society, published the study’s findings in July of 2016. Because of the project’s success, the Alabama Department of Public Health has funded West Alabama AIDS Outreach to expand the program to seven rural probation offices.

Lichtenstein began involving undergraduates in her SOC 360 class in Fall 2016. Students offer HIV educational materials to community members in the waiting area of the probation and parole office and tell them free testing is available. They answer questions about HIV testing, create and distribute flyers and accompany volunteers to a room in the office where Ann James, prevention education coordinator for West Alabama AIDS Outreach, conducts testing.

“Officers are essentially there to find out if the convicted offenders have violated probation,” Lichtenstein says. “If they’ve used drugs or engaged in any illegal activity, they can be arrested on the spot, so it’s not a great place to ask if they would like to be tested for HIV.”

UA students and WAAO are there to give the information and help them get the information they need. "I love to share my experience with people like my mom, my sister and even my roommates,” she says. “It’s not only beneficial for me to share my knowledge because it keeps me sharp, but it’s also beneficial for them because there is so much stigma behind the disease, especially in the U.S.”

Barber says the partnership among the probation and parole office, West Alabama AIDS Outreach and Lichtenstein’s class was crucial to the program. “This project was a three-legged stool,” Barber says. “Without the help of all three parties, the program wouldn’t have worked, but together, we were able to build something great.”

For more information about SOC 360 Sociology of HIV/AIDS, contact Dr. Bronwen Lichtenstein at 205-348-7782 or blichten@ua.edu.
Not long after enrolling in a social entrepreneurship course at The University of Alabama, Maddie Addicks couldn’t stop thinking about a statistic she learned in the class: every 30 seconds, a child dies from a preventable, water-borne disease.

“When I first signed up, I honestly didn’t know what I was getting into,” says Addicks, a junior from Houston majoring in telecommunication/film and marketing. “Not only has it been the most impactful college class I have taken, but it has given me a new perspective on life. After hearing how people were dying from drinking contaminated water, I knew I had to help.”

Addicks launched an email campaign that raised more than $1,700 for Filter of Hope, a Tuscaloosa-based nonprofit that makes household water filters and works with partners to distribute them to impoverished families around the world. Addicks’ efforts provided 43 water filters that can produce clean water for 260 people for 10 years.

The UH 120 Social Entrepreneurship course introduces students to social entrepreneurship and its obstacles and successes and challenges students to create their own projects aimed at addressing worldwide problems. Don Johnson, director of partnerships for Filter of Hope, teaches the course, and many students develop campaigns that support the organization’s mission.

Since Fall 2015, approximately 150 UA students have contributed to Filter of Hope through the class, awareness and fundraising campaigns and events, internships and trips to distribute filters in countries including Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. UA students have raised approximately $21,000 for water filters, giving 4,200 people access to 288 million gallons of clean water over 10 years.

Johnson says Filter of Hope staff have been amazed by UA students’ efforts. “They display tremendous energy, creativity and compassion for those without the basics of clean water,” he says.

Each $40 filter lasts 10 years, operates without electricity or batteries and can clean 150 gallons of water per day, enough for six people. Students often demonstrate the filters during presentations and events.

“Most people in America use more water in their morning shower than people in other countries have in a year.”

“Many children grow up with stomach illnesses and just grow accustomed to the pain and dehydration that comes with that. This affects their school attendance and pursuit of education; it affects their growth and development.”

– WILL MILLER, FILTER OF HOPE PARTNER IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
“day,” says Alexandra Hart, a social work graduate student from Andalusia, Ala., who completed a Filter of Hope internship in Spring 2016 and traveled to Haiti to distribute filters in July of 2016. “Clean water is almost a foreign concept to us as Americans because it is expected here."

Hart raised more than $6,000 – providing more than 150 families with clean water – by making presentations at a church and middle school in her home town. “I think a lot of times people want to help, they just aren’t aware of how, ” she says. “I shared the facts of the global water crisis and told people what they could do to help stop it. ”

Some of those facts: One out of seven people lack access to safe drinking water, according to the World Health Organization, and approximately 1.5 million people die each year from water-borne illnesses – a leading cause of human sickness and death.

The consequences of contaminated drinking water reach even further. Filter of Hope founder Bart Smelley says breaking the poverty cycle in developing countries – his initial goal – isn’t possible when families are chronically sick from drinking contaminated water.

“Many children grow up with stomach illnesses and just grow accustomed to the pain and dehydration that comes with that,” says Will Miller, a full-time missionary in the Dominican Republic who partners with Filter of Hope and UA students to distribute water filters. “This affects their school attendance and pursuit of education; it affects their growth and development.”

Miller relays the story of a single mother of five children, ages 5 to 12: “For more than a decade, she had been nursing a sick child every single day. For the last six months, since she received the filter from a college group, all her children have been healthy and have had near-perfect attendance in school. Health benefits aside, these kids are finally getting an education.”

When UA students travel to other countries to help distribute water filters, they typically go into families’ homes and, through an interpreter, explain how the filters work, how to install them on 5-gallon buckets and how to clean and maintain them. Filter of Hope’s partnership network supplies replacement parts, if needed. “We aren’t just taking these filters and saying, ‘hope it works, but if it doesn’t we can’t help you anymore,” Hart says.

Even though she knew the situation, Hart says she was startled when a little boy who had been tagging along with her group as they distributed filters in a Haitian village ran away as rain began falling and reappeared with a jug, using it to catch water from a roof. “That was an intense moment for me,” she says. “I can literally turn on a faucet at any minute and have access to clean water, and this small child is catching water off a roof. His family will use this water to drink or cook with.”

Hart says her experiences in Haiti and with the Filter of Hope internship taught her skills she’ll need as a social worker. “I learned how to go into another culture and environment and ask if I could help without being threatening or belittling,” she says. “I learned to empower people by giving them a tool so they could meet their own needs without feeling like their independence had been taken away. I also learned how to advocate for people who cannot advocate for themselves, which is another huge component of social work.”

Johnson says both the social entrepreneurship class and collaboration with Filter of Hope offer lessons about teamwork, communication, funding and leadership that translate into any profession.

“Wanting to get into the business world, I learned it is crucial to stay organized when working on a project, especially when it involves raising money and managing contacts,” Addicks says. “Through this project, I was able to gain firsthand experience promoting an organization I was passionate about to individuals who had never heard of it.”

To learn more about UH 120 Social Entrepreneurship or Filter of Hope, contact Don Johnson at don@filterofhope.org.
UA students play a key role in making Alabama the top state in the nation for detecting and addressing vision problems in young children.

BY OLIMGA GRIDER

“Going from not seeing to being able to see was huge,” says Calloway, a University of Alabama freshman from Covington, Ga., majoring in advertising. “It was like the world just opened up for me. Flowers were flowers instead of smudges.” He also started doing better in school.

Calloway was able to share similar benefits with children in Alabama through FocusFirst, an initiative in which college students and recent graduates provide free, high-tech vision screenings to children ages 6 months to 5 years, detecting vision problems in approximately 11 percent of those screened.

“I would notice some kids squinting at things, and when I screened them, they usually showed up with eye problems,” says Calloway, who spent 5 to 10 hours per week conducting FocusFirst screenings in West Alabama in Fall 2016. “I am glad I was able to help bring the same feeling I had to those kids.”

Vision problems in young children are more common than most people realize. Each year, poor eyesight adversely affects millions of children under age 6 across the United States, due largely to lack of public awareness about the importance of eye care in young children and the inability of children to recognize their own vision impairment. These problems are heightened in families suffering from financial hardship and lack of access to medical care. While vision screenings are most effective during the preschool years, when early treatment of many conditions can prevent irreversible vision damage or loss, only 21 percent of preschool children nationwide receive comprehensive vision screenings.

In Alabama, college students conduct vision screenings for children in pre-kindergarten programs and daycares as part of a state-wide, campus-based effort led by The University of Alabama and Impact America, a nonprofit housed at the University. FocusFirst partner Sight Savers America, a nonprofit dedicated to improving eye care among children, provides free follow-up care to those with potential vision problems.

Many college-student volunteers receive academic credit for their work with FocusFirst through service-learning courses. “There are two sides to FocusFirst,” says Stephen Black, director of the UA Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility and founder of FocusFirst. “We wanted to figure out a way to make a positive impact on the community and also get college students involved. Many students take for granted the ability to see a doctor regularly.”

Thanks to FocusFirst, Alabama leads the nation in diagnosing and correcting vision problems in young children.

Since the launch of FocusFirst in November 2004, more than 3,380 student volunteers have screened more than 347,500 children in 67 counties across Alabama. FocusFirst regularly works with 10 colleges, and UA leads and coordinates the state-wide screening efforts. Since 2004, more than 1,000 UA students have participated with FocusFirst, screening 23,949 children in 14 counties. Thirty-eight UA students participated in screenings across eight counties during the 2016-17 academic year, reaching more than 1,700 children.

“Early vision screenings are such a simple and sustainable way to help future generations succeed,” says Rebecca Rakowitz, a sophomore from Stamford, Conn., majoring in journalism. Rakowitz served as a student leader in Honors College’s Health Action service-learning program in 2016. Health Action is one of four Honors Action programs that take place the week before fall-semester classes begin. Students earn academic credit through UH 103 Honors Action. In 2016, 20 students worked with FocusFirst through Health Action, which informs students about health disparities and provides opportunities for them to address these inequalities. Students learned that poor vision, when left untreated, can have negative consequences on children’s educational performance, self-esteem and behavior.

Amanda says her initial reaction when she found out her 1½-year-old daughter, Elise, failed the FocusFirst screening at her daycare was that Elise must have been moving during the screening. After her follow-up appointment with an eye doctor, Elise was rushed to a specialist for emergency care.

“Elise has Coats’ disease, a rare condition in which blood vessels behind the retina break and leak fluid, permanently damaging the retina. If not treated early, Coats’ disease almost always leads to permanent blindness in the affected eye, and removal of the eye is usually necessary,” says Erin Hughen, whose son Cayden was diagnosed with a congenital cataract. “Sight Savers has helped a lot instead of having to pay out of pocket.”

Calloway says his experience with FocusFirst changed his perspective of his own background. “It really showed me poverty in a way that I hadn’t seen it,” he says. “I grew up thinking my town was pretty poor, but seeing the areas I was in showed me how privileged I was to grow up in the place I did.”

Volunteering with FocusFirst was a unique and humbling experience, Rakowitz says. “It made me feel connected to the community and that I, as a college student, can make a difference in community members’ lives,” she says.

FocusFirst is a signature initiative of the UA Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility and Impact America, a nonprofit housed at The University of Alabama that collaborates with 30 colleges and universities in four states to implement service-learning projects that engage students in addressing human and community needs while enhancing their sense of social and civic responsibility.

To learn more about FocusFirst, visit cse. ua.edu.
University of Alabama student Jackson Knappen says some Nicaraguans wake up at 3 in the morning to ride a boat, hop in a taxi and walk for miles just to receive a medical checkup.

Each May, UA students work at the Clínica Alabama-Granada, a public health-care facility serving low-income residents of Granada, Nicaragua, and surrounding towns. They are part of the Nicaragua Clinical Experience, a partnership between UA’s Honors College and FOR (Friends of Rudy) Incorporated, a foundation that supports the clinic and was formed by Birmingham, Ala., physicians.

“Constantly I was placed in situations I had never experienced before, and I had to learn to grow and adapt to these situations,” she says. “I learned to deal with tough conditions like heat and no air conditioning and figured out just how much I could push myself.”

The idea and the motivation [for the clinic] came from seeing so much need for help in Nicaragua,” says Dr. Rudy Vargas, a Granada native who founded the Clínica Alabama-Granada. Vargas came to the United States in 1969 for postgraduate medical training and moved to Birmingham in 1973 to complete a fellowship in endocrinology at The University of Alabama at Birmingham.

In May of 2016, 12 UA students helped staff the Clínica Alabama-Granada. They worked in daily, small-group rotations to perform four tasks: welcoming and triaging patients; assisting doctors; organizing inventory; and operating the clinic’s pharmacy. Students volunteered in the clinic five days a week for an average of five hours per day, treating approximately 40 patients each day.

The most common health problems students help treat are diabetes and hypertension. Many patients’ diets are high in sugar, carbohydrates and salt, which contribute to these conditions.

“Seeing someone who needed help and was grateful for it, it’s just worth it,” says Molly Neill, a junior from Decatur, Ala., double majoring in psychology and Spanish, traveled to Nicaragua in 2016 and says the work challenged her in many ways.

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“In the spring semester before traveling to Nicaragua in May, students earn academic credit through UH 120 Nicaragua Clinical Experience, which equips students with medical Spanish and insight into health-care constraints in low-income countries and provides hands-on medical training from a nurse. While in Nicaragua, students write regular journal entries analyzing and reflecting on their experiences.

Engagement in local culture is an essential element of the trip. Students live with local families during their month in Granada.

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Through UH 120 The Nicaragua Clinical Experience, students address the medical needs of low-income residents in a nonprofit clinic.

BY LANE STAFFORD

University of Alabama student Jackson Knappen says some Nicaraguans wake up at 3 in the morning to ride a boat, hop in a taxi and walk for miles just to receive a medical checkup.

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Students in a cooperation and conflict course bring creative classes to kids through Arts Renaissance in Tuscaloosa Schools.

BY MARY SHANNON WELLS

Although her day job is teaching classes as an associate professor in The University of Alabama’s anthropology department and New College, Dr. Marysia Galbraith is also a potter. “I value creative expression in my own life, and was saddened to learn how little opportunity there is for it in local public schools,” Galbraith says. “Of course, teachers incorporate these activities into their lessons, but they have so many other obligations associated with curriculum. So the arts are often neglected.”

Galbraith felt she had to do something to address the lack of arts education in her community’s schools, and she used her role at UA to expand her reach and create deeper learning experiences for college students as well.

“My idea was to set up a program – art workshops in all media – music, dance, theatre, writing, pottery, arts and crafts, painting, even engineering – to local public school children, particularly in Title I schools where a substantial proportion of the children are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch,” Galbraith says.

For the past six years, students enrolled in Galbraith’s NEW 238 Honors Cooperation and Conflict course have led workshops in elementary schools through the organization she founded, Arts Renaissance in Tuscaloosa Schools (ARTS). Students hold hour-long workshops at University Place Elementary School in Tuscaloosa and Matthews Elementary School in nearby Northport, Ala. Depending on teachers’ preferences and the activity, a UA group can work with an entire grade in a large space like a lunchroom or with one class at a time. The NEW 238 students work in teams to plan and carry out the workshops, and each team of UA students conducts a workshop at least once a month.

Between 250 and 500 children attend ARTS workshops each semester. In Fall 2016, 17 UA students in the NEW 238 class led approximately 500 kids in art projects at their schools. Every semester, approximately 10 UA students also assist with workshops as volunteers.

“It’s very fulfilling,” says Ethan Johnson, a junior from Hartselle, Ala., majoring in computer science. “College is generally all about you and your future, so to get away from that even for just a day to work with others brings a great sense of joy.”

After taking a few other service-learning courses, Brittany Grady says she fell in love with the ARTS initiative. She served as head intern for ARTS in Fall 2016, coordinating schedules with students and teachers, guiding workshop ideas, recruiting volunteers and making sure students had supplies needed for their workshops.

“One lesson that I have learned as a result of working with ARTS is that large-scale change begins with community development,” says Grady, a sophomore from Birmingham, Ala., majoring in interdisciplinary studies with a concentration in human rights through New College. “Putting time and energy into improving one community can be translated into impacting the entire world.”

In the NEW 238 Honors Cooperation and Conflict class, students explore the ways in which members of society succeed and fail in living together effectively. They investigate and seek solutions for contemporary social problems, most specifically the issue of social and economic inequality in the United States. After every volunteer experience, they write journal entries reflecting on the community needs they observed and connecting those needs to course topics.

Dr. Tripp Marshall, principal of Matthews Elementary School, which does not have an art program or art teacher, says the activity he most enjoyed watching his students participate in involved creating pottery face jugs.

Marshall says he was especially touched as he watched one of his students working with the clay. “He may not have been a straight-A student, but he had an A project because he really cared, and he was engaged and he learned,” Marshall says.

During a paper-airplane ARTS workshop, children used the engineering-design process, a series of steps engineering teams employ to solve problems. This process is part of the kids’ science curriculum, so they learned how to combine art with another subject, something they had never done before, says Andrea Craig, a fifth-grade teacher who has worked at Matthews Elementary for 23 years.

UA students say they look forward to workshops as much as the children do and find themselves learning from the kids.

“These kids are so smart, and they never stop asking questions,” says Andrea Boyer, a senior from West Des Moines, Iowa, majoring in psychology.

Lucas Lowry, a senior from Shawnee, Kan., double-majoring in history and religious studies, says he didn’t expect to enjoy the workshops because he doesn’t consider himself good with kids. “But I found myself really latching onto the experience and curious about the things they had questions about,” he says.

Lowry also says leading ARTS workshops has taught him skills he’ll bring into the working world, especially with regard to communicating and training.

“One of the main things that I’ve had to do is rethink multiple times how to explain something,” Lowry says. “We talk a lot theoretically about how one size does not fit all when it comes to education, but I think one size does not fit all also applies in any job you’re going to have.”

Boyer, who plans to become an occupational therapist specializing in pediatrics, says she is better prepared for her career as well.

“It is experience with patience and creativity, learning how to teach things at a level each age group will understand, and working on fine-motor skills, which OT focuses on,” Boyer says. “More broadly, it was a great opportunity for growth of leadership skills, time management and team cooperation.”

For more information about NEW 238 Honors Cooperation and Conflict or Arts Renaissance in Tuscaloosa Schools, contact Dr. Marysia Galbraith at 205-348-8412 or mgalbrai@ua.edu.
Students majoring in music therapy volunteer with community organizations throughout their college careers, assisting individuals and groups ranging from infants to senior citizens.

BY MARY SHANNON WELLS | PHOTOS BY ELLEN JOHNSON, DYSEN NEEB AND JESSI SIMMONS

S
service learning is not just a component of The University of Alabama’s music-therapy program; it’s a core principle of the curriculum.

The music-therapy program at UA is an intensive, four-year undergraduate process, plus a six-month internship. Students are involved in service learning through numerous courses.

“I came into college not knowing what I wanted to do,” says Jordan Bailey, a senior from Tuscaloosa majoring in music therapy. “Participating in the music-therapy program has made me excited for my future. I feel very prepared and ready to become a music therapist.”

But what exactly is music therapy?

“Music therapy is the clinical practice of using music to address non-music objectives,” says Dr. Ellary Draper, an assistant professor of music therapy.

People who receive music therapy services often have learning disabilities, autism-spectrum disorders, intellectual and developmental disabilities, cerebral palsy, Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, psychiatric disorders or addictions. Hospital and hospice patients and residents of nursing homes and assisted-living facilities also benefit from music therapy. Music therapists set patient goals, which might be physical, emotional or psychological, depending on the individual’s needs. Therapists then use music to cue behavior such as playing an instrument to develop fine motor skills, dancing to improve range of motion or writing a song to exercise cognitive abilities.

Students in UA’s music-therapy program volunteer with approximately 20 community organizations, providing therapy in a variety of settings. Community partners include Brewer Porch Children’s Center, Sprayberry Education Center, Crossing Points, North Harbor psychiatric facility, Druid City Hospital Regional Medical Center, Capstone Village and Hospice of West Alabama.

Every undergraduate student completes at least 180 service hours. Annually, UA students majoring in music therapy devote a total of approximately 1,700 hours to conducting therapy sessions in communities across West Alabama. Through a six-month internship, each student also completes a minimum of 1,020 service hours at a single site. Most students work 40 hours per week during the internship.

“We appreciate and value the long-term collaboration we have with the agencies in the Tuscaloosa area,” says Dr. Andrea Cevasco-Trotter, associate professor of music therapy and director of UA’s music-therapy program. “It is only through these collaborations that students have the opportunity to apply what they have learned in the classroom to the clinical setting. It is often when students start their clinical work in the community that they truly understand the power of music to create positive changes in the people we serve.”

The following courses incorporate service learning.

MUS 182 Observation and Orientation to Music Therapy
Second-semester freshmen enroll in MUS 182 Observation and Orientation to Music Therapy. As part of the class, they conduct weekly, 30-minute therapy sessions with kids at Brewer Porch Children’s Center.

Brewer Porch is a residential and outpatient treatment center for children and adolescents with severe emotional and behavioral difficulties and autism-spectrum disorders. The center offers a music-therapy class just as it does math and science classes.

MUS 182 students and Dr. Draper review the children’s Individualized Education Plans and base their music-therapy activities around the needs and objectives of each child.

“These kids, particularly in the residential programs, have pretty significant histories of abuse and neglect and lack of educational opportunities, lack of social opportunities,” says Dr. Ross Grimes, clinical director at Brewer Porch. “It’s another chance to engage with them and give them connections with people and show them they can be good at something.

“It’s nice to see kids excited about going to music therapy. I think many of them see it as a reward when it’s really a critical component of the treatment program as a whole, and that’s the engagement we want to see.”

MUS 282 Music Therapy Practicum
In MUS 282, sophomore music-therapy students hold weekly, 30-minute sessions at Caring Days Adult Day Care, which provides programs for adults with Alzheimer’s and other memory disorders. Each student leads one or two songs or other music-therapy activities. When they’re not leading the group, students sing and dance with individual participants. Oftentimes, the students play songs that were popular when the Caring Days clients were teenagers.

“Most people go into Caring Days thinking, ‘It’s going to be older people; they’re going to be grumpy.’ But when we walked in the first day, they were all applauding,” says Ashlyn Riley, a music-therapy-equivalency student from West Alabama. Through a six-month internship, each student also completes a minimum of 1,020 service hours at a single site. Most students work 40 hours per week during the internship.

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MUS 382 juniors and seniors take the course every semester, with new placements each time. The program aims to give them experience across as many settings as possible so they can decide what types of patients they would like to work with during their six-month internships and their careers.

"Ultimately, what you want the students to be able to do is find a population that they’re passionate about," says Charlie Seaman, director of music therapy clinical field education at UA.

Bailey says he’s developed skills needed to be flexible and versatile.

"This semester, I am working in the oncology unit at DCH Hospital," he says. "I help the patients by distracting them from pain, providing them with relaxation, facilitating socialization, elevating their mood and much more," Bailey says. "I also work with children at the UA Speech and Hearing Center this semester. We focus on academic skills, social skills and motor skills."

Many students enroll in music therapy to combine medical interests with a love for music. Both Riley and Williams began music therapy courses for this reason.

"I was interested in doing music because I’m a violist, and I was also very interested in working in the medical field," Williams says. "I was looking for a way to pursue both of those in college, and when I learned about music therapy, I thought, ‘That’d be the perfect fit.’"

Williams sees herself working in a hospital. "Once I gain some experience, I want to do presentations in Alabama hospitals to show them how their patients would benefit from music therapy," she says.

For more information about the music-therapy program, contact Dr. Ellary Draper at 205-348-1432 or eadraper@ua.edu or Dr. Andrea Cevasco-Trotter at amtrotter@ua.edu or 205-348-7804.
Through EN 658 History of Rhetoric, students organize and archive documents in the historically black town of Hobson City, Ala.

BY ERIN MOSLEY

Pennsylvania native Aleah Goldin says she chose to study in Alabama because of her interest in the civil rights movement and how its narratives are told and, sometimes, not told. So when the University of Alabama graduate student concentrating in creative writing, composition and rhetoric learned a master's-level English course would give students the chance to create a documents archive for a historically black town, she enrolled in the class immediately.

Through EN 658 History of Rhetoric, students are partnering with Hobson City, Ala., to develop, organize and digitize a community archive. “I learned more about the way writing is recorded and how easy it is for moments of history to be lost or destroyed,” Goldin says of her experiences in the course and working in Hobson City.

Hobson City, Ala., a two-hour drive from The University of Alabama campus in Tuscaloosa, lies just outside Annis-ton, Ala., and is at risk of losing much of its history. Hobson City was established on Aug. 16, 1899, making it the oldest incorporated African-American city in Alabama and the third oldest in the nation.

Hobson City residents, “and we played a part in archiving these historic places through the lenses of their inhabitants.”

In 2014, Robinson learned of the Historic Black Towns and Settlements Alliance and met McCrory. The two quickly realized their work could be mutually beneficial. Robinson’s bachelor’s thesis project required an archival course instead of researching an existing one.

Allie Sockwell, a master's student studying composition and rhetoric, explains why seemingly insignificant documents can be invaluable. “Something as simple as a water bill – sometimes people don’t know where their family was,” she says. “This could help them piece their family together. The whole point was to create one space where members of the community could research their families.”

McCrory says other cities have begun to join the organization.

HBTSA members developed a plan with six objectives for preserving their towns. Several goals emphasize the importance of document preservation. “In addition to original town records, documents need to be digitized, resorted and permanently housed,” the fourth objective states.

In 2014, Robinson learned of the Historic Black Towns and Settlements Alliance and met McCrory. The two quickly realized their work could be mutually beneficial. Robinson’s

and English studies at UA and instructor of EN 658, and her class of 10 students traveled to Hobson City three times to begin work on a community archive. They dedicated a total of 165 service hours, organizing 60 storage boxes of documents. Several students continued working on the archive after the semester ended, and 70 percent of the documents have been organized.

“We got pretty invested,” says Brett Carter, a PhD student from Charleston, S.C., studying composition and rhetoric. “We really wanted to see it through.”

The concept for the Hobson City archiving initiative began with a collaboration between Mayor McCrory and Everett Fly, an architect whose work in historic preservation is nationally recognized. In 2015, their partnership resulted in the establishment of the Historic Black Towns and Settlements Alliance, a group of historic black towns whose mission is to “protect and preserve for future generations the heritage, history and cultural traditions of alliance members such that those who follow will have the ability to assume active stewardship to understand, interpret and appreciate these historic places through the lenses of their inhabitants.”

In addition to Hobson City, HBTSA originally consisted of Tuskegee, Ala., Grambling, La., Eatonville, Fla., and Mound Bayou, Miss. McCrory says other cities have begun to join the organization.

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PRESERVING THE PAST

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Hobson City was incorporated as Alabama's first all-black city in 1899.; photo by Myrna McElroy/UA News.

UA students organize documents in Hobson City. Documents such as this old yearbook can hold clues to families’ pasts.; photo by Myrna McElroy/UA News; A 1901 photo of Hobson City’s first mayor and council.; photo courtesy of The New York Public Library.

COMMUNITY MATTERS

To learn more about EN 658 History of Rhetoric and the Hobson City archiving project, contact Dr. Michelle Bachelor Robinson at mrbrobinson@ua.edu or 205-348-4177.
The 57 Miles Perry County Partnership, named after the distance between Marion, the county seat of Perry County, and The University of Alabama campus, connects UA students with community members to address rural poverty in a vibrant and historically significant area that is also one of America’s most disadvantaged.

Perry County was once one of the wealthiest counties in the United States due to the fertile soil of the Black Belt region, but it is now among the poorest. As farming became more mechanized after the Civil War, the region’s small farms were unable to compete with larger ones, and a slow decline began. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 47 percent of the county’s residents live in poverty. The unemployment rate is approximately 10 percent, per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and residents face health and educational disparities.

At the same time, Perry County is home to two renowned colleges – Marion Military Institute and Judson College – as well as a park containing some of the most ecologically diverse environments in North America, antebellum homes operating as museums, numerous other historical sites and communities rich with culture.

"People don’t realize how much there is to see in the small town of Marion and how historically significant Perry County is to this state and even to the country," says Cooper Holmes, a sixth-generation Perry County farmer and director of the Alabama Black Belt Foundation. "Coretta Scott King was from here. She and Martin Luther King got married here. Gen. Sam Houston’s wife was from Marion, and they got married here as well. Jimmie Lee Jackson was shot and killed in Marion, and his death led to the marches across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma."

UA’s Honors College launched 57 Miles as a year-round initiative in May 2013, following five years of summer outreach efforts by students involved in the University Fellows Experience. 57 Miles now includes more than 12 programs. Through this expanding range of initiatives and projects, students collaborate with Perry County community members to identify challenges and develop and implement solutions. They draw on knowledge gained in the classroom while cultivating skills in project development, leadership, teamwork, nonprofit management and community engagement.

"Working in Perry County, an image of rural and overlooked America, has been integral to my understanding of exclusionary economics," says Rick Lewis, a junior from Birmingham, Ala., majoring in English. "Much of the rural South has been ignored or even purposely shorted by initiatives aimed at creating modernized communities with strong economic support networks from all governmental levels. Our work in Marion aims to fill these gaps and empower citizens to have their voices heard and answered."

During the 2016-17 academic year, 225 UA students dedicated nearly 3,000 hours to service programs and projects in Perry County.

"At the Honors College, we feel an important part of our students’ university experience is to get to know communities outside Tuscaloosa, learn about those communities’ strengths and challenges and match up their own skills and interests with the needs of the people of our state," says Jackson Harris, an Honors College community development coordinator who works full time in Marion. "Perry County is a good place to do that because we have a lot of friends and partners here." With the support of the Marion community, Honors College began leasing a building in downtown Marion in 2014 to serve as headquarters for 57 Miles’ efforts. Students named the building P3 to stand for a "third place" – a place besides home or school where people can gather to find personal and community identity.

Various events, including community receptions and dance nights for local college students, are held at P3, and the building is open for community members to host meetings, study or just hang out. To facilitate town discussions and build relationships, UA students regularly attend functions at P3. In March and April of 2017, UA students worked with the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation and the Alabama Black Belt Foundation to host the Spring Lyceum, an event that offered tours of sites including the Lincoln Normal School, one of the first educational institutions for African Americans founded after the Civil War. Marion Military Institute, Judson College and several antebellum homes. UA students led tour groups.

Holmes says he’s proud of the positive momentum he sees in his hometown and thrilled University of Alabama students are part of it. "With the help of UA’s Honors College and multiple nonprofits, I see no reason why we won’t keep moving forward," he says.

The 57 Miles Perry County Partnership continues to add programs and participants. Current projects include:

- **Day of Service events in which UA students participate in renovation and beautification projects.** In Fall 2016, UA students held two Day of Service events in partnership with Marion Military Institute, engaging 165 college students who worked with community members from schools and other organizations. Groups worked primarily in...
Marion’s downtown square, painting a mural and raising and installing landscaping around the county courthouse. In February of 2017, UA students partnered with students from Marion Military Institute and Judson College, holding a Day of Service in which more than 80 students helped community members with projects involving a nature walk, the downtown square, a community playground and baseball fields.

“I was able to invest in the state of Alabama, which is where I have the pleasure of calling home for at least the next four years,” says Kayleigh Westbrook, a freshman from Dallas, Ga., majoring in communication studies and general business. “It was a chance to see more of this great state and to experience the exhausting effects of a day of service, but also to see the amazing results. It was an honor to get involved.”

Holmes says beautification projects are vital to Perry County’s goal of improving its economy through tourism. “If a town is pretty and clean, people are more likely to stop, have lunch and ask what there is to do,” he says. “When they find they can’t do it all in one day, they’re likely to come back and bring more people.”

• Black Belt Action, a weekend service-learning course for incoming Honors College freshmen that takes place before fall classes begin. While executing service projects, students explore elements of community and implications of systemic poverty through discussions with local leaders, group reflection and reading assignments. In 2016, 30 freshmen and eight student leaders performed renovation and renewal projects at Francis Marion High School and a building housing the nonprofit Renaissance Marion.

“This experience has made a huge impact on my life, from finding some of my best friends through college to making me appreciate what I have and see how I can better myself,” says Thomas Lengel, a junior from Wilmington, Del., majoring in finance and economics.

Lengel is a Black Belt Action leader and has participated in the program since he was a freshman. “I look forward to coming back to Marion every year because I can see the impact we’re making on the community as well as the freshman coming into an unknown area and learning more about Alabama.”

• Outlet, an initiative designed to fight illiteracy and empower youth in Alabama through reading, writing and sharing poetry. Student teams travel to two high schools in Perry and Pickens counties to conduct weekly, hour-long sessions in which high schoolers analyze, produce and perform poetry. During 2016-17, 12 UA students worked with high schoolers in six classes.

“To me, Outlet is a way to provide a voice to students who typically are not seen as having opinions on the goings-on of the world,” says Katie Carter, a senior from Auburn, Ala., majoring in secondary education language arts. “Writing provides students an opportunity to voice their thoughts, while poetry adds emotions to those thoughts.”

• Dinner with Perry County, held twice a semester, which brings Perry County community members together with University of Alabama honors students to dine in Perry County. Each dinner is based around themes such as community, entrepreneurship in rural Alabama and small-town politics in the South. Col. Ed Passmore, director for the Center for Leadership and Career Development at Marion Military Institute, hosted the first Spring 2017 dinner. Students from UA’s Honors College, Marion Military Institute’s service-learning club and Judson College discussed experiential service learning on college campuses.

“Having dinner with students and faculty in the Marion community inspired me to grow as a campus leader and community service participant,” says Anthony Berry, a senior from Jeanerette, La., majoring in economics.

• Engineering Day, an annual event in which UA students, faculty and staff present hands-on engineering demonstrations at Francis Marion High School. On March 24, 2017, 15 UA students, Dr. John Kim, assistant professor of chemical and biological engineering, and more than 300 elementary, middle and high school students participated in the event.

Presentation topics ranged from the electronics behind launching rockets to reducing the cost of space transport to the engineering required to build a racecar.

“Engineering Day at FMHS is an exciting, hands-on experience that gives high schoolers who don’t have access to many STEM opportunities a way to see different options a STEM career can provide,” says Kristen Homme, a junior from Chesterton, Ind., majoring in chemical engineering and biology. “I love connecting Perry County with the University’s diverse network of students, organizations and research to help kids understand the impact of science and technology on their lives and foster curiosity about these fields.”

• Theatre projects in which UA students teach high schoolers theatre principles through games and other activities. High schoolers are encouraged to make connections between these activities and life skills such as teamwork, critical thinking and presentation skills.

“Teaching theatre in Marion has given the other volunteers and me a new perspective and allows us to be inspired every week by our students, who are eager to try new things and experience the world from different angles,” says Alexandra Bolton, a sophomore from Madison, Ala., majoring in social work and marketing.

Holmes says beautification projects in a Perry County cemetery. Students participating in Black Belt Action perform maintenance projects in a Perry County cemetery. RIGHT: Children practice their lines during a theatre project led by UA students.
Despite the polarizing nature of the 2016 presidential election, a class of journalism students at The University of Alabama turned a blind eye to politics and focused on assisting voters in their state, Mississippi and Florida through a project called Electionland.

“We weren’t really focused on the outcome of the election at all,” says Shawna Bray, a senior from Naperville, Ill., double majoring in public relations and journalism. “For the most part, we tabled that conversation entirely. We were working together.”

In an effort to combat common voting obstacles such as long lines, malfunctioning machines, voter rolls with missing names and unrequired requests for photo identification, the nonprofit news organization ProPublica launched Electionland. The project engaged a nationwide coalition of nearly 100 media outlets including TV and radio stations, newspapers and websites in 49 states as well as journalism departments at 13 universities.

“Too often the extent of voting problems is caught after polls close, when citizens’ right to vote has already been abridged and potential votes have already been lost,” ProPublica stated in a press release.

Primary challenges Alabama, Mississippi and Florida voters faced on Election Day 2016 were long lines and broken machines. According to a study produced by the Brennan Center for Justice, long lines disproportionately affect African American and Hispanic communities.

‘Many of the long lines that manifested on Election Day in 2012 could have been mitigated with planning that looked for facts known before the day of the election, like the number of registered voters and the level of resources allocated to each polling place for Election Day,’ the study states.

With the aid of social media platforms such as Twitter, Electionland sought to cover voter issues in real time, acting as a cross-country, virtual newsroom. Journalism students were trained to monitor and verify social-media reports, which ProPublica editors checked and sent to local media organizations for swift investigation and reporting.

Fifteen journalism students manned The University of Alabama’s Crimson White newsroom throughout the day Nov. 8, 2016, working a total of 112 hours. Students constantly checked social media for reports of polling-place problems while TV monitors displayed local news. As a result of the students’ efforts, Electionland partners including AL.com, WBRC FOX6 News, the Commercial Appeal and the Tallahassee Democrat investigated dozens of polling places across Alabama, Mississippi and Florida.

Prior to Election Day, students attended workshops to learn how to use verification tools and reverse-image search engines.

Bray says helping a voter in Mississippi was the most rewarding experience for her. “I spent about 20 minutes verifying the report and finding the exact location,” she says. Most complaints, like the one Bray received, were related to long lines and excessive wait times, usually caused by computer malfunctions. Many of the tools Electionland utilized were developed by First Draft News, a nonprofit coalition founded in 2015 to “raise awareness and address challenges relating to trust and truth in the digital age,” according to the organization’s website.

Cokie Thompson, a senior from Memphis, Tenn., majoring in journalism, says one reason projects like Electionland are valuable is because they connect journalists to the public. “Any way that journalism can have contact with community members and build trust is really important,” Thompson says. “We are here to keep information open and accessible.”

When Chip Brantley, senior lecturer of emerging media and JN 430 instructor, added a service-learning component to the course in Spring 2014, it was through a project called Lost Stories. Students work alongside editors at AL.com to research photographs from the Alabama Media Group archives. “I saw these cool photos and thought, ‘These are amazing,’” Brantley says. “I couldn’t believe they were just sitting in this file cabinet.”

Brantley came up with a plan for his students to revive histories in danger of being forgotten. “It was taking from these photos that had been lost in time and making them public again, and finding stories to tell that were contemporary,” he says.

Brantley recalls a photograph of a 1931 murder scene in which a group of men stand crowded around another man slumped behind the wheel of a car and clearly dead. The man, William Lee Taylor, was a prison guard who had a feud with brothers Drennen and Cecil Baggett, who were later convicted of the crime. A group of students contacted Drennen Baggett’s son, Drennen Baggett, Jr. “It turned out to be this great story that deepened our understanding of what happened in the photo, but also was a portrait of this man who remembered his father,” says Brantley.

“This type of journalism is not generally taught. Brantley says, but telling these stories is conducive to community building.

In addition to their work with Electionland, students in the Fall 2016 Digital Media Workshop course produced 15 articles for AL.com as part of the Lost Stories project, dedicating 200 hours to the assignments.

After the 2016 election, Brantley’s course became involved with the First Draft Partner Network, which aims to improve skills and standards in the reporting and sharing of information online. Partners work together to increase news literacy among social media users, streamline the online news verification process and improve eyewitness accounts. “I see these types of projects being a part of this class going forward,” Brantley says.

To learn more about JN 430 Digital Media Workshop, contact Chip Brantley at chip.brantley@ua.edu.
EMPOWERING AT RISK YOUTH

Social-work students support and advocate for teens and young adults with troubled pasts.

BY OLIVIA GRIDER

Young Americans who are transitioning to adulthood with a history of trauma, mental illness, substance abuse or violent behavior are falling through society’s cracks, especially in states like Alabama, where 66 of the 67 counties are classified by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration as mental-health-care-professional shortage areas. A University of Alabama School of Social Work program is helping fill those gaps by producing master of social work graduates trained to support youth ages 16 to 25 who are experiencing behavioral problems or are at risk for them. As part of the Transitional-Age Youth University of Alabama project, students work with teens and young adults at a variety of agencies and organizations through a 500-hour, field-education placement.

"Many of the clients we serve have seen more pain than many of us see in a lifetime," says Cara Loy, an MSW student from Madison, Ala., who interned in the foster-care program at the Latin American Youth Center. "I want to empower these youths to see that their past shapes them, but it does not define who they choose to be and what they choose to do with their lives." During her Spring 2017 internship, Loy took kids to doctors’ appointments and supervised visits with their parents. She says they often opened up to her about issues they were struggling with. “I feel like everything I have learned in my classes about trauma and child development is being played out live-action in these kids,” she says. “I am able to see the signs of trauma, spot the triggers and respond patiently and appropriately.”

Between 2015 and 2017, the TAY-UA program produced 32 master of social work graduates skilled in addressing issues faced by at-risk, transitional-age youth. During their training, UA students spent 16,000 hours working with teens and young adults and agencies serving them in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Washington, D.C. Internships were part of the SW 595 Field Education course and took place at mental-health clinics and hospitals, foster-care organizations, schools, veterans’ facilities and substance-abuse programs.

Students attend a rigorous orientation on working with transitional-age youth and complete online coursework, which they review individually with a supervisor each week.

"There are many youth in need of behavioral intervention due to substance abuse, depression and/or involvement with the justice department," says Dr. Carol Drolen, an associate professor of social work and project director for TAY-UA. "Our schools are not equipped to manage this need, and often these clients are not seen until their situation worsens.”

She cites a study showing treatment spending for mental-health and substance-abuse disorders in the United States is projected to increase to $280.5 billion in 2020, up from $171.7 billion in 2009. “The projections are very clear—the demand for services continues to grow,” she says of the research, released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Helping clients cope

Students employ crisis-intervention and motivational-interviewing techniques with both kids and their parents. Through crisis intervention, they help a client through crises and perceived crises by acknowledging the client’s emotional state and helping him/her regain equilibrium. Motivational interviewing is a way to help an individual determine how he/she would like to change and develop a plan for making that change. The social worker then supports the individual in carrying out the plan.

Jasmine Triplett, an MSW student from Starkville, Miss., who interned with the Department of Human Services’ Division of Family and Children Services and with Associates for Renewal in Education, says the TAY-UA program and field placement made her feel empowered and confident as a social worker. “One client was difficult in the beginning of my internship,” she says. “She didn’t like to socialize new faces. Throughout the semester, as different events unfolded, she saw that I was there for her and in her corner. Now every time she sees me, she hugs me.”

Students also participate in interprofessional teams, collaborating with counselors, psychologists and primary-health providers, as part of their field-education experiences. “I love being able to work with other professionals to link our kids to services that can help them navigate their emotions and cope with what they’ve been through,” Loy says.

Policy and advocacy

Students learn to work with legislators and government employees as well, in order to promote policies that will positively affect at-risk, transitional-age youth. Drawing on knowledge acquired through courses such as SW 501 Advanced Social Welfare Policy Analysis, students meet with legislators and explain how current or prospective legislation will affect their clients.

Kristin Torres, an MSW student from Jackson, Miss., assisted with an advocacy campaign called Going Places that aims to change policies that make getting a driver’s license difficult for transitional-age foster youth. Require-ments for a legal parent or guardian to sign for permit/license tests and obtain vehicle insurance are inhibitive for foster youth. “Foster youth are often forced to become self-sufficient at a much earlier age than their peers. Without a driver’s license, these youth may not be able to get a job, maintain a job or drive to school for purposes of higher education,” Torres says.

Taylor Pinckney, an MSW student from Bynum, Ala., who interned with the Child Welfare League of America, met with members of Congress to explain how transitional-age youth within their states would be harmed if programs such as Medicaid and the Social Services Block Grant were defunded. Without full support for these programs, at-risk teens and young adults will have more difficulty obtaining job skills and getting help for mental illness, Pinckney says.

Creating TAY social-work specialists

Drolen says a goal of the TAY-UA program is for graduates to build careers serving transitional-age youth, particularly in the Southeast. Many graduates and students are working or seeking employment in that field.

“What I learned the most through my experiences with the TAY-UA program is that I truly do like working with transitional-age youth,” Pinckney says. “In fact, I am hoping to get hired on at an agency that specifically works with that population. The sad truth is many people believe these children are lost causes due to their age, and that is simply not true. This population needs more people to be empathetic and caring.”

For more information about the TAY-UA program, contact Dr. Carol Drolen at cdrolen@sw.ua.edu or 205-348-3935.
Despite opportunities to explore hundreds of courses, multiple libraries and myriad extra-curricular activities, Cokie Thompson says her most valuable experience at The University of Alabama took place 55 miles from UA’s campus.

Thompson, a senior from Memphis, Tenn., majoring in journalism, was one of six 2016 participants in the New College Walker County internship program. For the past six summers, students in the program have lived in Walker County, Alabama, interning for local nonprofits. Students can earn academic credit for their work through NEW 310, an independent study.

Thompson assisted Main Street Alabama, a nonprofit focused on bringing jobs and economic development to the state’s historic communities, with downtown revitalization projects in Jasper, the county seat.

“A lot of the core tenets of the program — and the concepts of community development and nonprofit work — were things that I looked at and said, ‘That’s me,’” says Thompson, who was nominated for the program by a previous Walker County intern. “Even though before this I never would have considered working in a place like Jasper.”

According to the United States Census Bureau, 23.5 percent of Walker County’s 65,294 residents are impoverished, nearly twice the national poverty rate. Walker County has seen a 4.6-percent decrease in employment since 2013. The current unemployment rate is 7.2 percent, higher than the national average of 5.5 percent and the Alabama average of 5.7 percent. Between 2010 and 2014, 19.8 percent of the population under age 65 had a disability. Nonprofits in the county aim to promote civic engagement, health and quality of life for residents.

Five UA students spent six weeks in Walker County in the summer of 2016, each working 20 to 30 hours per week for local nonprofits. Since the program’s inception, students have spent more than 4,000 hours meeting civic, educational, environmental and other needs in Jasper and the surrounding area.

In addition to partnering with Main Street Alabama in 2016, interns worked for the Children’s Advocacy Center of Walker County, the 21st Century summer school program, Walker Area Community Foundation, Bankhead House and Heritage Center and the Walker County Health Action Partnership.

At their individual assignments, interns did everything from office work to reading and writing letters to children to archiving local history and assisting a children’s therapist.

New College partners with the David Mathews Center for Civic Life and the Walker Area Community Foundation to structure, fund and organize the internship program.

During the spring semester prior to working in Walker County in June and July, students attend class twice a month. Class assignments, readings and guest speakers provide an introduction to the principles of civic engagement and civic health and a look into Walker County’s positive aspects and challenges. Interns study Walker County, meet residents and leaders from its communities and create a county-asset map.

Emily Pickert, a senior from San Antonio, Texas, majoring in nonprofit management through New College, interned with Jasper’s Main Street Alabama organization in the summer of 2015 and returned to Walker County in 2016 as the internship program’s student coordinator. Pickert says the internship gives students the opportunity to participate in efforts run by passionate members of the community.

“We’re not bringing a prepackaged solution to anyone’s problems,” Pickert says. “We’re just saying we believe in your community, we see that you have ideas and we’d like to help.”

Pickert says the program is part of a long-term effort that relies on community residents as well as outside aid.

“There’s no quick-fix problem in Walker County. If there were any, they’re handled,” Pickert says. “What’s happening is more of a fundamental change, and that can’t happen in a summer. It takes time. We’re just a part of that big thing that’s happening.”

Thompson and her supervisor, Mike Putman, worked to connect businesses and residents in downtown Jasper. Thompson describes a lending-library project as an example of this kind of collaboration. “The local newspaper donated old newspaper stands, a local car wash cleaned them up, a local artist painted them, the local car dealership put a sealant on the paint and a local glass shop placed the glass in front of it,” she says. “Then people would donate books. It was all locally done, and it was a cool thing to see.”

Five miles southwest of downtown Jasper, Matthew Zeliff, a junior from Atlanta majoring in community development and international studies through New College, spent his summer at Walker County Lake as an intern for the Walker County Health Action Partnership and United Way. Zeliff’s project aimed to improve lake access and promote recreation, particularly physical activity.

Zeliff says he arrived in Walker County with an interest in environmental health and nonprofit work and left with hands-on experience in influencing a community’s daily life and long-term health.

“I would absolutely say that I learned more than I ever could learn in any class or any book or presentation,” Zeliff says. “Learning from people in the field who are more experienced than me and getting to see what those people thought and said and did – you just can’t replicate that in the classroom.”

Community partners, including Mike Putman of Main Street Alabama, say they value the interns’ ideas and youthful perspectives. “The University is sending interesting and interested people to Walker County, and I, for one, appreciate it,” Putman says.

The David Mathews Center organizes activities and internships across the state to promote civic participation. “If we’re not equipping Alabama’s next generation to do the work of citizenship and be active, informed members of their communities, we will never accomplish our mission,” says Cristin Foster Brawner, executive director of the David Mathews Center for Civic Life and the New College course instructor. For more information about the New College Walker County internship program, contact John Miller III, assistant director of New College, at 205-348-2642 or millet031@ua.edu.

Summer of Service in RURAL ALABAMA

Through New College, students collaborate with community organizations while living and working in Walker County.

BY DYLAN WALKER | PHOTOS BY MATTHEW WOOD

Student Cokie Thompson works with Mike Putman of Main Street Alabama.
When Turning Point, a nonprofit that combats domestic abuse in West Alabama, approached Hale County police about opening a location in the area, its staff was asked one question: what could Turning Point bring to the Latino community? Thanks to University of Alabama students studying Spanish, the answer was hope.

In SP 356 Advanced Grammar and Composition, students improve their Spanish grammar and writing skills while translating to nonprofits’ documents from English to Spanish. “You could see how it was being used in the real world, and that’s really what I like about Spanish — and that’s what I like about science, too,” Kazyak says. “What you’re doing in class is really applicable to life right now.”

Angela Williams, a sophomore from Sumter, S.C., majoring in management information systems, translated documents including permission slips, instructions and student work-sheets for Schoolyard Roots. Williams says the course inspired her while improving her understanding of Spanish-language colloquialisms. “We had to take into consideration who our audience was, and we had to work a little harder to make it sound more natural,” Williams says. “So that really helped my Spanish writing.”

Because of the students’ work, the West Alabama Hispanic community can better locate and access nonprofit resources.

Portia Shepherd, education and outreach coordinator at Turning Point, says translated documents are helping the organization grow. When working to expand into Hale County, Shepherd was able to show Spanish-language resources to local officials, demonstrating Turning Point’s ability to reach the Hispanic community in Alabama’s Black Belt, a low-income region of the state known for its dark soil. Before students offered their services, clients had to drive an hour to a location with translators. “We’re able to have that information there all the time, instead of clients having to drive up to Tuscaloosa like before,” Shepherd says.

Information Granja’s students translated for Turning Point includes a resource list and a “Power and Control Wheel” outlining the causes of domestic violence. Shepherd says Turning Point uses these tools across its nine-county service area and shares them with other domestic-violence outreach centers. “They’re using it in Huntsville; they’re using it on the state level,” Shepherd says. “We’re using it different places because a lot of organizations don’t have the money to ensure that everybody can get the services they provide.”

Since Spring 2016, more than 60 students in the SP 356 Advanced Grammar and Composition class have dedicated more than 300 hours to translating nonprofit organizations’ outreach materials into Spanish. In Spring 2016, the class translated 43 multi-page documents, and Fall 2016 students translated 40 items. During the next two years, Granja’s students will translate Schoolyard Roots’ entire curriculum into Spanish.

Schoolyard Roots operates school gardens and teaches more than 3,300 children about healthy eating and community gardening each year through weekly lessons. (See article on page 10.)

Thanks to University of Alabama students as it is serving the community of Tuscaloosa. It’s not just busy work,” he says of the tasks that help students practice their new language. “It’s work that matters.”

For more information about SP 356 Advanced Grammar and Composition, contact Dr. Xabier Granja at 205-348-6355 or xgranja@ua.edu.
Students in SPE 100 Exceptional Lives in Society research and discuss societal issues, volunteer with community organizations and spread kindness through the UA Rocks initiative.

BY OLIVIA GRIDER | PHOTOS BY MARY GRACE RODEN AND KRISTEN WALLACE

University of Alabama student Rob Davis says a class he took in Spring 2017 gave him a voice, especially related to issues of race and poverty, and changed his perspective of people with disabilities. As part of the course, Davis volunteered with an organization that provides after-school care and vocational programs for children and young adults with autism.

“The things I learn from the people at Arts ‘n Autism show me that I have been completely wrong about people with autism,” says Davis, a junior from Monroeville, Ala., majoring in marketing. “They are some of the happiest people I have ever met. They do not complain about their situation, and we all can learn something from their view on life.”

The course, SPE 100 Exceptional Lives in Society, introduces non-education majors to characteristics of cultural diversity, exceptionalities and social/behavioral issues in the 21st century. Students research and discuss poverty, education, race, health care, domestic violence, disability and mental illness. Members of the Fall 2016 class also discussed the presidential election and analyzed the candidates’ stands on subjects including the economy, poverty, education, environment, discrimination, world relations, crime, child abuse, health care, mental illness, abortion and disability services.

“Octavious Lockhart, a senior from Valley, Ala., majoring in management information systems, says he wanted to spread a message of hope with the project. “We as a community have to stick together instead of going against each other,” he says.

The students also conducted small group or individual analyses of four social problems and provided possible solutions. Nichols says that while all students were interested in making a difference, the assignment revealed that misinformed views and fear of the unknown often hampered the ability to be socially and ethically responsible stewards.

“The class helped me learn to lend a hand to anybody in need and try to be a speaker for people who don’t have a voice,” Lockhart says.

The course, SPE 100 Exceptional Lives in Society, contact Dr. Sandra Cooley Nichols at 348-6226.
Public-relations students in two courses raise awareness about the number of veterans on university campuses and the challenges they face.

BY LANE STAFFORD

While it’s well known the transition to civilian life can be a struggle for veterans, many people might be surprised by the number of former service members making this transition on college campuses.

With approximately 1,040 veterans attending classes at The University of Alabama, one in 35 students is a former military member.

Tyler Hohbach, a student veteran and treasurer of the UA Campus Veterans Association, says coming back to school at age 24 was not easy.

“I felt like I had made a mistake coming here without knowing anyone, and had I not already signed a lease and turned in my military paperwork to leave active duty, I might have decided to just stay in the military and continue with online classes,” Hohbach says. “Finally, I got

“I am fortunate to attend college because my father chose to serve in our country’s time of need. Now my brother stands on the front lines having taken his oath, and I plan to do the same soon.”

– STUDENT DEVIN STEVENS

The In the Chair campaign invited students, faculty and staff members to sit in the campaign chair and tell how the military has affected their lives.
difficult, especially because many fellow students have no
knowledge of what it’s like to be in the military. “When you’re a civilian, you’re literally and figu-
rationally worlds away from what these men and women ex-
perience,” she says. “The campaign bridged the gap that
existed between traditional students and student veter-
ans by showing that, while the life experience can greatly
differ between these two groups, these men and women
are still students on our campus. We should recognize,
know and be willing to help them, just as we would with
any other student on campus.”

The public-relations students won first place in the
2016 Bateman Case Study Competition, a national con-
test that challenged college-student teams to raise
awareness on campuses and in communities about the
struggles student veterans face as well as increase sup-
port and networks for these individuals.
The Public Relations Student Society of America re-
ceived 70 entries for the 2016 Bateman Case Study Com-
petition. Of those submissions, three were chosen as fi-
talists, and students who led those campaigns presented
their work to a panel of judges in Chicago in May 2016.
“I loved working on the ‘In the Chair’ campaign be-
cause I firmly believe that it impacted our campus com-
unity,” says team member Samantha Vlahos, a public-
relations major from Monroe, Conn., who graduated in
2016. “We were able to shine a light on an amazing cam-
pus organization, the Campus Veterans Association, by
reminding our campus that we are all connected in some
way to the military.”
The chair served as a campaign theme and a symbol of
actions students can take to support peers who are vet-
erans: for example, getting to know the student veteran
seated next to them in class and advocating for priority
registration so veterans can get seats in classes they need
to graduate and receive their GI Bill funds on time. Stu-
dents also worked to place the empty chair in prominent
areas at campus sporting events to honor prisoners of
war and those missing in action.
The Bateman team posted photos and videos of student
veterans and other campus community members sitting
in the chair while explaining how the military has affected
their lives. The stories were posted on the campaign
website, inthechair.ua.ee
members increased
percent, and the number of active members increased
33 percent. Approximately
253 people in UA att-
endance pledged their support for prisoners of
war and military members missing in action. The cam-
paign Instagram profile received 4,126 likes across 39
posts, and the team’s efforts raised $400 for the Cam-
pus Veterans Association.

Vlahos says the group’s project not only helped UA’s
student veterans, but also positively impacted Bateman
team members.
“Professionally, this campaign took me to the next
level,” she says. “I was able to stand out among entry-
level candidates because I gained invaluable real-world ex-
perience. I touched almost every aspect of public rela-
tions with this campaign.”
Christina Coleoman, a public-relations major from
Westlake, Calif., who graduated in 2016, says she’s thank-
ful for the skills she gained as well. “I learned how to
work together with a team of completely different people,
to think creatively and outside the box to organize and
implement a campaign,” she says.

Hohbach worked closely with the Bateman Team dur-
ing the campaign. “Bateman has been an absolutely incred-
able,” he says. “I cannot even describe how much they
have helped the Campus Veterans Association.”

Teri Henley, faculty advisor for the Bateman Compe-
tition Team and instructor of APR 433 Public Relations
Campaigns and MC 495 Capstone Agency Experiential
Learning, says she is proud of the group’s accomplishments.
“This is a huge national honor,” Henley says of the
team’s performance in the competition. “One of the best
outcomes is that we plan to continue to partner with
CVA through Capstone Agency because the campaign
was such a success.” Capstone Agency is the UA-student
run communications firm.

In April 2016, Henley received a $2,000 grant from the
UA Center for Community Based Partnerships. Cap-
stone Agency is using this grant, in part, to create printed
materials informing the University community about
student veterans and the Campus Veterans Associa-
tion. For Veteran’s Day, the agency sent an infographic
about veterans at UA to ev-
ey faculty and staff mail-
box.
Both Coleman and Vla-
hos attribute the campaign’s achievements to its straight-
forward yet powerful mes-

I think the In the Chair campaign was successful because it started with a
very simple concept: get to know the person sitting next to you,” Coleman says. “This simple statement means so
much, though, and can transcend any college campus
across the United States.”

APR 433 Public Relations Campaigns gives students the
opportunity to plan, execute and present a complete
public-relations campaign for a local, regional, national
or international client. Working in teams, students ap-
ply both theoretical and practical knowledge acquired in
their previous coursework. The course is offered in the
fall and spring semesters.
MC 495 Capstone Agency Experiential Learning fo-
cuses on application of the communications process
through real-world experiences with Capstone Agency
clients. The Bateman competition team is considered a
Capstone Agency client each Spring semester.

For more information about APR 433 or MC 495, con-
tact Teri Henley at henley@apr.ua.edu or 205-348-0365.
In a story-telling course that examines legal systems, students profile residents of a rural Alabama town who were sued after they expressed concerns about their community's health.

BY ERIN MOSLEY

In December of 2008, 5.4 million cubic yards of coal ash spilled into the Emory River in Roane County, Tennessee, after a barrier failed at the Tennessee Valley Authority Kingston Fossil Fuel Plant. It was the largest coal-ash spill in history. A byproduct of coal production, coal ash contains a mix of arsenic, lead, mercury and other toxicants that can cause cancer and neurological damage in humans, according to a report from the Physicians for Social Responsibility and the American Lung Association.

From 2009 to 2010, much of the spilled coal ash was transported by train to the Perry County Arrowhead Landfill near rural Uniontown, Ala., an impoverished community with a majority-black population.

After a group of Uniontown residents worried about their community's health filed a complaint with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Civil Rights and posted their concerns on a Facebook page, owners of the Arrowhead Landfill, which is located in a residential area, sued them in the spring of 2016, alleging defamation and seeking $30 million in damages. Uniontown's annual median household income is $15,054, according to the 2010 U.S. Census.

Uniontown residents Green Group sued. In February of 2017, Green Group withdrew its lawsuit and agreed to address future disagreements with community dialogue first rather than litigation. It also agreed to notify the public before the Arrowhead Landfill receives any potentially hazardous waste products and to continue using current EPA-approved standards to seal off any future shipments of coal ash.

Wilson says he found his strength in long-form writing and told the help of the Anatomy of a Trial course. Wilson now will begin a graduate program in magazine writing at New York University in Fall 2017.

TCF 466 Anatomy of a Trial is a two-semester course that begins each fall. Students from all disciplines are encouraged to apply. For more information, contact Chip Brantley at chip.brantley@gmail.com or 205-348-4892 or Andy Grace at agrace@ua.edu or 205-348-8245.
On the first day of her public-relations writing course, Chandler Shields admits she might have cried.

Shields, a senior from Madison, Ala., majoring in public relations, is passionate about communications, politics and advocating for those with special needs. APR 332, a course with a service-learning component that requires students to develop communication plans for nonprofits, united these three passions.

“This course was really special to me, and I just couldn’t believe that I was going to get class credit for it,” Shields says. Each semester, students in the course collaborate with a local nonprofit to assess its communication needs. They then create messaging strategies, tools and campaigns for the organization.

The course has been partnering with the Autism Society of Alabama since 2011. Tracy Sims, who teaches the course and is an instructor in UA’s department of advertising and public relations, says the partnership is a development opportunity for students that also provides a service to the community. “My goal was to set up a win-win situation,” Sims says. “Over the years, I really feel like I’ve become an advocate for the organization myself because I’ve learned so much about the organization and what it does and who it serves.”

The Autism Society of Alabama represents individuals with autism and their families. “Our goal and mission is to improve services for those on the spectrum through education and advocacy,” says Melanie Jones, executive director of ASA. The society’s programs educate those directly affected by autism as well as the public. ASA also assists caregivers and works with the Alabama Legislature to protect citizens on the autism spectrum.

In Spring 2016, APR 332 Public Relations Writing students created a media kit for the Autism Society of Alabama and promoted the Tuscaloosa Walk for Autism, ASAs largest fundraising and awareness event in the western part of the state, and the first 5K Race to Solve the Puzzle. They raised $8,600 for ASA, and approximately 2,000 people participated in the events. Students garnered news coverage by the Tuscaloosa News, the Crimson White (UA’s student newspaper), Tuscaloosa television station WVUA-23 and the city’s iHeart Radio station. In Fall 2016, students promoted ASAs respite program, which provides funds for families to hire temporary helpers, giving those caring for a loved one with autism a break or assistance. They also developed promotional campaigns for the Autism Spectrum Disorder Identification Card, which facilitates interactions between first responders and individuals on the spectrum, and for ASAs more than 30 networking groups across the state. A previous APR 332 class planned, promoted and implemented a “Drive Away Autism” event that helped ASA secure the 1,000 purchase commitments the state of Alabama needed to produce an autism-awareness license plate. License-plate sales are now one of ASAs most successful fundraisers.

“I’m very humbled, thankful and honored to be given the opportunity to work for this cause,” says Mary Catherine Molay, a senior from Birmingham, Ala., majoring in public relations. “It meant a lot to me because the grand-daughter of a close family friend is affected by autism.”

Students with no previous connection to autism developed a passion for the issue as well. “Even if I don’t necessarily struggle with or fully understand something, it’s still nice to help others in your community,” says Jada Culver, a senior from Woodstock, Ga., majoring in public relations. “I felt very purposeful doing it all, and honestly that made me want to do better in the class. This stuff matters for real people here in the community.”

Promotional materials students produce include fliers and posters, scripts for public-service announcements and social-media and blog posts. They also write press releases, advertisement copy and letters to media professionals and potential fund-raising partners. Representatives from the Autism Society work with students throughout the semester to teach them about communicating with clients.

“It was really cool because we were able to apply everything that we did in class into making something for them to use,” Molay says. “When you’re a small nonprofit that has a very big impact, you wear a lot of hats.”

Jones says she is always impressed with the students’ work. “It has been a great collaboration,” she says. Sims says she hopes to install in her PR writing students – all majoring or minoring in public relations – a lasting passion for community service and social responsibility.

“I do not expect all of my students to become practitioners in the nonprofit sector,” Sims says. “But I do hope that at least they do understand the social responsibility that any organization has, whether it’s for-profit or nonprofit.”

Some students, like Shields, want to continue working in nonprofit communications. She hopes to get a job in Washington, D.C., lobbying for special-needs organizations. Molay is considering working with the ASA’s junior board.

Sims also teaches a section of APR 332 that works with the Sassafras Center for Arts and Environment, a startup organization developing a sustainable park in East Tuscaloosa and city-wide bike routes.

For more information about APR 332 Public Relations Writing, contact Tracy Sims at 205-348-5166 or sims@apr.ua.edu.
UA Students enrolled in a Southern memory course tell the stories of Tuscaloosa County lynching victims.

BY ERIN MOSLEY AND JAMON SMITH | PHOTOS BY JEFF HANSON, ERIN MOSLEY AND MARGARET LAWSON

Dr. John Giggie describes the eras most Americans refer to as Reconstruction, the Gilded Age and the Roaring Twenties as periods of racial terror for a significant portion of the country’s population. “At a time when the United States was in fact growing and prospering, many African-Americans feared for their lives,” says Giggie, associate professor of history and African American studies at The University of Alabama and director of the Summersell Center for the Study of the South.

More than 4,000 black people in 12 Southern states were lynched between 1877 and 1950, according to the Equal Justice Initiative, a Montgomery, Ala.-based nonprofit human rights law firm whose mission includes challenging racial and economic injustice. And these are just the cases EJI has documented. At least 360 lynchings took place in Alabama, and at least 10 Tuscaloosa County men were murdered in this way.

In Tuscaloosa, as in most places where lynchings occurred, there was no present-day trace of this brutal past, and the lives of victims were largely forgotten. In Spring 2017, Giggie and students in a service-learning course he created helped change this.

Dr. John Giggie (left) and members of the Spring 2017 HY 300/AAST 395 class helped advocate for a historical marker commemorating the lives of Tuscaloosa County lynching victims.
Giggie took the Equal Justice Initiative’s baseline data on lynchings in Tuscaloosa County and asked his students to delve deeper.

Fifteen UA students enrolled in HY 300/AAST 395 Southern Memory: Lynching in the South collectively spent more than 1,000 hours documenting the lives and circumstances surrounding the deaths of 10 Tuscaloosa County residents who were lynched between 1884 and 1933. They created a digital humanities website to share their findings with the public and serve as a database for lynching in the South. Students also worked in partnership with the Equal Justice Initiative to advocate for a historical marker commemorating victims. On March 6, 2017, the marker was erected in front of the old Tuscaloosa County Jail. After the unveiling, more than 1,000 people attended a ceremony hosted by UA students, EJI representatives and community members at First African Baptist Church to honor the victims. Students Maruka Walker and Ellie Bowers were among the speakers.

After exploring the history of lynching in America, students learn the research skills they need to find important documents and share them through a digital humanities website.

Giggie says his class has multiple goals. The first is to search to Pickens and Jefferson counties. “I’m also looking at developing a curriculum for other classes to pursue a similar pedagogy and have it be a national model, working with EJI,” he says.

For more information about HY 300/AAST 395 Southern Memory: Lynching in the South, contact John Giggie at jmgiggie@ua.edu or 205-348-1859.
UA students step outside their social worlds and explore other lives and views while creating documentaries that tell stories of justice and injustice.

BY OLIVIA GRIDER

Kendall Roden says taking the Documenting Justice film class was the best decision she made at The University of Alabama. Roden, a Dallas native who graduated in 2016 with a degree in management information systems, says the course exposed her to people and perspectives she wouldn't have encountered otherwise.

“It’s so powerful to hear people’s stories,” she says. “It’s easy to hold tight to the beliefs you grew up with and to allow those notions and stereotypes to cloud your views of people and places. It made me reflect and realize, wow, there’s so much I don’t know and won’t know if I don’t take time to connect with people.”

Documenting Justice is a yearlong, multidisciplinary course that teaches students, most of whom are not film majors, to create short documentaries analyzing the many dimensions of culture and social experience involved in stories of justice or injustice.

In addition to giving students opportunities to engage with people outside their usual spheres, “it also gives an audience access to lives and characters they don’t normally come into contact with,” says Andy Grace, an award-winning filmmaker who co-instructs the course with Rachel Morgan, lead programmer for Birmingham’s Sidewalk Film Festival.

Documenting Justice film topics have examined the impact of Alabama’s immigration laws on Hispanic residents, the transformation of a low-performing, high-poverty school into one of the state’s most outstanding in just three years and the internal struggle of recovering from sexual assault, among many others.

During the first semester of the course, students learn documentary theory and history as well as the ethics of cinematic non-fiction. The second semester of the course is dedicated to the production of seven- to 10-minute documentaries. Students work in pairs to shoot and edit their films.

Roden and Kaitlin Buck produced “Demolition by Neglect,” which explored the decline of a massive apartment community built in Birmingham in the 1940s and torn down in 2016. Its first residents were mainly white, upper-class returning soldiers and their families. By the
time the buildings were demolished, the neighborhood had sunk into poverty and gained a reputation as a place for drug deals and shootings.

“When a neighborhood is blighted, people make assumptions about those who live there – it’s their fault, they don’t take care of it, etc.” Roden says. “We wanted to see if the narrative we had heard about such neighborhoods was the whole truth. And we wanted to do this by focusing on the people.”

Roden and Buck conducted research and interviewed people who lived in the complex during its heyday and after the closing of Paul Grist State Park affected the people who operated and used the park. “A random shot of the trees operated and used the park. “A random shot of the trees Anderson made with Josh Wiggins, looks into how the closing of Paul Grist State Park affected the people who operated and used the park.”

Students develop a lifelong interest in and appreciation for filmmaking and take their new skills into their careers. “That we produce so many exceptional films is a testament to the work students put in year after year,” he says. “And videography is such a powerful medium to engage people. The excitement of inspiring people through a visual medium is something I wouldn’t have realized without this class.”

Grace says he is continually proud of how much time and effort his students put into the filmmaking process. “We produce so many exceptional films is a testament to the work students put in year after year,” he says. “That we produce so many exceptional films is a testament to the work students put in year after year,” he says. “And videography is such a powerful medium to engage people. The excitement of inspiring people through a visual medium is something I wouldn’t have realized without this class.”

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Roden says she fell in love with filmmaking and has created numerous videos as part of her job as a technical consultant with Microsoft. “Every aspect of life involves communicating stories, she says. “And videography is such a powerful medium to engage people. The excitement of inspiring people through a visual medium is something I wouldn’t have realized without this class.”

Watch Documenting Justice films at vimeo.com/documentingjustice. For more information, contact Andy Grace at 205-348-8245 or agrace@ua.edu.
New Media for NONPROFITS

Students in TCF 335 New Media help nonprofits amp up their digital presence and take control of their websites and social-media accounts.

BY MARY SHANNON WELLS

In Fall 2012, following the April 27 tornado that devastat-ed Tuscaloosa, Dr. Chandra Clark, an assistant profes-sor in the department of journalism and creative media at The University of Alabama, began teaching UAl TCF 335 New Media course. Clark says the class, a requirement for telecommunication and film majors, wasn’t enhancing all the skills students would need for careers after graduation. She also noticed that after the tornado, many nonprofits that paid outside Web developers weren’t able to update their websites and other digital media quickly or efficiently. So Clark augmented the course with a service-learning component that would give her students the opportunity to help local nonprofits while learning real-world multimedia skills.

Students in TCF 335 New Media work with nonprofit community partners to build websites and website content, create and improve social-media accounts and educate nonprofit staff members on keeping those websites and social media accounts going. The end-of-semester goal is for nonprofits to start controlling their own messages, rather than relying on outside assistance.

Students in TCF 335 New Media help nonprofits amp up their digital presence and take control of their websites and social-media accounts. So Clark augmented the course with a service-learning component that would give her students the opportunity to help local nonprofits while learning real-world multimedia skills.

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Since Fall 2012, 195 students have helped approximately 40 community partners develop and learn to maintain a professional Internet presence. Students work in groups of five, with each group contributing roughly 50 service hours per semester. Using an estimation system developed by Independent Sector, an organization that represents nonprofits, Clark determined students have contributed more than $1.8 million worth of digital-media work to their nonprofit partners.

“There was a feeling of accomplishment, but it was also so humbling that we could help an organization that does so much positive work in the community,” says Sarah Macaluso, a telecommunication and film major from Orlando, Fla., who graduated in May 2016.

Community partners for TCF 335 change every semester. In Spring 2016, students partnered with nonprofits focused on poverty in Tuscaloosa and West Alabama. Some groups also created their own poverty-related initiatives.

Find Hope Here

The Find Hope Here Project operates programs to assist the homeless and is raising money to build The Refuge, a homeless shelter and transitional living space in Northport, Ala. TCF 335 students who worked with the Find Hope Here Project built a website for the organization, revamped its social-media presence, created audio/video public-service announcements and developed a marketing plan. Macaluso, the team’s website developer, says group members didn’t focus solely on individual roles; they also collaborated on each project.

Love INC

Students who worked with Love INC, another organization that assists the homeless, created a project called Connected through Love that works with apartment complexes in Tuscaloosa to house homeless people in empty units. The project also provides financial-literacy classes for those living in the apartments. “I learned that the tools we developed in class could help change the communities we live in,” says Danielle Burney, a telecommunication and film major from Alexandria, Ala., who worked on the Love INC team and graduated in May 2016.

UA Little Tusks

Students developed the idea for the UA Little Tusks initiative, an after-school mentoring program for children living below the poverty line. In addition to homework help, arts and crafts activities and other mentoring services, the program provides meals to the children.

Home Sweet Homes

Another student-generated idea, Home Sweet Homes, uses the RV/trailer relief method often employed following natural disasters as a model for housing the homeless in West Alabama. Habitat for Humanity Tuscaloosa picked up the concept and could bring it to fruition.

Finding Freedom

TCF 335 students found domestic violence is at the root of many issues related to poverty, so one group created Finding Freedom: Domestic Violence to encourage discussion about domestic violence and sexual assault in West Alabama and promote Turning Point, which assists victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and the UA Women and Gender Resource Center.

False Promises

To raise awareness of the little-known but growing problem of sex trafficking in West Alabama, students also built a website and various multimedia projects for an initiative called False Promises: Sex Trafficking.

“Dr. Clark’s New Media class is the most important class I have taken at UA,” says Rickey Shahid, a telecommunication and film major from Birmingham, Ala, who graduated in 2016. “Today everything we do involves social media. She made sure we learned how to use these platforms to our advantage.”

Working with nonprofits teaches lessons as well, Clark says. “I want them to realize that they can give back to the community with their skills,” Clark says.

For more information about the TCF 335 New Media course, contact Dr. Chandra Clark at 205-348-2697 or chandra.clark@ua.edu.
Rachel Beverly used to think many people living in poverty just hadn’t worked hard enough. Her views changed when she took a University of Alabama course that explores poverty in America and introduces students to impoverished people in their own communities.

“arlier I began to understand that I lived in a bubble,” says Beverly, a senior from Dothan, Ala., majoring in accounting. “I knew low-income people lived right down the road, but I had not taken the time to get to know them and their situations.”

Students enrolled in the UH 331/MGT491 SaveFirst: Poverty, Faith and Justice in America course discuss issues the working poor face, perceptions about those living in poverty and policies affecting low-income families and individuals. At the same time, they complete eight hours of income-tax-preparation training, take an IRS certification test and serve as volunteer tax preparers for low-income clients at community-based sites across Alabama.

Beverly says she was initially hesitant to assist low-income individuals with their tax returns. “But then walks in a gentleman with multiple W-2s, working whatever odd jobs he can,” Beverly says of her experience at a tax-preparation site. “One lady I encountered had worked as an assembly-line worker for over 20 years. She showed me how she lifts her right arm to the sky and twists counter-clockwise hour after hour.”

Beverly says the course made her aware how fortunate she is to attend college and to have grown up with supportive people mentoring her. It also made her consider how she would want to be treated if she had been born into a low-income family.

Students provide free income-tax-preparation services in partnership with SaveFirst, an initiative of the UA Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility. SaveFirst seeks to ensure low-income Alabamians receive the full Earned Income Tax Credit – the federal government’s largest anti-poverty program supporting low- to moderate-income families – and other credits to which they are entitled. It also counters predatory lending practices by allowing families to avoid costly commercial tax preparers whose exorbitant fees counteract the benefits of federal tax credits.

Students who participate in SaveFirst often interact with individuals and families with backgrounds very different from their own, an experience that offers them new perspectives on those living in poverty. Like Beverly, many say the experience challenges commonly held assumptions that those living in poverty have done something wrong or are lazy.

Andrekious Evans, a junior from Talladega, Ala.,
majoring in computer science, says class readings and discussions didn’t change his opinions, but gave him the supporting evidence he needed to effectively express his views. Evans grew up in a household that included his mother, two siblings, two cousins and an aunt who is disabled due to multiple sclerosis. Evans’ mother worked more than 40 hours per week at a nursing home to support the family.

“I have witnessed my mom wake up at 4 a.m., be at work by 6 a.m., work until 6 p.m. that evening, come in and make sure everything is going smoothly in our house, cook us a full-course meal and repeat the next morning,” Evans says. “That scene does not sound like someone who is lazy or has a low drive for success. Sometimes you are just dealt a hand that you have to play with. There are plenty of people who are poor and receiving government assistance who are hard workers.”

Through the course, students also explore the ways faith traditions can affect responses to poverty and inform understandings of justice. They engage in interfaith discussions comparing and contrasting various faith traditions’ stances on service, obligation and justice and are encouraged to share their own experiences and opinions.

In 2017, 129 UA students assisted in preparing taxes at 16 sites across the state, helping more than 6,700 families claim more than $12 million in refunds. The students’ service helped these families save $2.7 million in commercial-tax-preparation fees.

In its 11th year, SaveFirst is the largest campus-based, free-tax-preparation initiative in the nation. UA students participating in SaveFirst in 2017 collaborated with more than 462 volunteers from 17 other campuses statewide and several community-based organizations, preparing returns for 9,081 families and helping them claim more than $15.6 million in refunds and save more than $3.6 million in fees.

Annually, more than 520,000 working families in Alabama claim the Earned Income Tax Credit, representing a $1.4 billion investment for the state. However, an estimated $133 million in EITC dollars are unclaimed by families who are eligible for the credit but do not know to claim it.

Moreover, 65 percent of Alabama’s EITC recipients pay an average of $400 to commercial tax preparers just to access this benefit. That extra money could help low-income families secure health insurance, pay down debts or put food on the table.

“When somebody takes $300 from you and you’ve got kids to raise, that’s a little bitter tasting,” says Antoinette Miller, a SaveFirst client who has paid commercial tax preparers in the past.

Another client, Christian Hunter, says he usually pays $250 to have his income taxes prepared, but last year he was charged $500. “Being a single parent, you need that money, and I knew I needed to find another alternative. I would have used the amount I was charged last year to pay for one of my children’s school tuition, no question.”

Stephen Black, instructor of the Poverty, Faith and Justice in America course and director of the UA Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility, says SaveFirst cultivates a desire in students to take responsibility for the wellbeing of the larger community. “This empowers them to critically think about the structural causes of the need for their service and to take leadership roles in developing innovative solutions to them,” he says.

Beverly volunteered at a tax site in her hometown and says “Savage Inequalities,” a book students read as part of the Poverty in America course, applied to her situation. The book explores the differences in two cities just a few miles apart. “This experience has helped me become more aware of the opportunities I have been given and how I can use my education to help those who work hard to support their families,” she says.

Justin Pendleton, who earned a degree in psychology and international studies in 2016 and is from Ypsilanti, Mich., says he feels better prepared to educate others about false stereotypes and ways in which certain groups are taken advantage of. For instance, because the poor live paycheck to paycheck, they are targets for title-pawn and payday-lending companies that offer quick money with annual interest rates that can average 400 percent.

“People of color are the majority of the target customer/victim base of payday loan businesses, despite being the numerical minority in America,” Pendleton says.

“Now when I stand face-to-face with a person who refuses to see the inequities in our country, I can point to articles and statistics and deliver a much-needed dose of the truth,” he says.

To learn more about SaveFirst or the Poverty, Faith and Justice in America course, see cesr.ua.edu or contact the Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility at cesr@ua.edu or 205-348-6492.
In Belize, students taking a geography/New College course help preserve the world’s most biodiverse ecosystem and improve quality of life for villagers while learning about the role of culture in environmental sustainability.

BY MARY SHANNON WELLS

Picture a calm beach with translucent water surrounding white sand. That’s what you would see on a cruise ship or tourist trip to Belize. University of Alabama students enrolled in GY 450/NEW 450 Conservation Field Studies in Belize experience that as well, but they do much more than sightsee during their two-week adventure in the Central American country.

In 2010, Dr. Michael K. Steinberg, an associate professor in UA’s geography department and New College, began sharing his passion for all aspects of Belize—from its environment to its culture—and his 25 years of research on the country by creating a course dedicated to conservation and humanitarian efforts there.

Service projects have included coral-reef rehabilitation, beach cleanups, fish and coral-reef diversity data collection for the understaffed and underfunded Belize Fisheries Department, work at Mayan village schools and reforestation efforts. Steinberg says he shows his students “a different side of Belize and the tropics than they would get off the side of a cruise ship.”

Monica Standohar, a junior from Tuscaloosa majoring in geography, had never been outside the United States before traveling to Belize with the group.

“Being in a very different cultural setting can be overwhelming and a bit scary, but it also forces you to challenge yourself and open yourself up to new experiences,” Standohar says. “Learning about some of the challenges Belize faces in regards to the conservation of natural resources really helped reinforce what I’ve learned through my classes at UA. We were able to see firsthand some of the efforts that are going into protecting the lands and resources. Issues like mangrove destruction, riparian deforestation and an overall lack of environmental awareness and education within communities can all have serious impacts on ecosystems.”

GY450/NEW450 Conservation Field Studies in Belize is held annually, during May Interim. In May of 2016, 17 students enrolled in the course planted 100 trees along a major river, cleared trails in a national park, surveyed the health of seagrass beds in Belize’s largest marine reserve and built artificial reefs as habitat for sea life.

Students interacted with Mayan people in the remote, rainforest village of San Pedro Columbia. They sampled locally prepared food, learned about villagers’ handmade crafts and planted trees on the banks of the nearby Columbia River in partnership with the Toledo Institute for Development and the Environment.

“It felt really good to be able to learn about, and work personally with, some of the local communities,” Standohar says.

The Toledo Institute for Development and the Environment partners with the village to create economic value from the seagrass ecosystem, as well as help villagers better understand how to conserve it.

“Working with the villagers created a strong bond,” Standohar says. “At the end of the field study, the villagers gave us a ceremony to express their thanks for our help. It was such a powerful experience.”

In Belize, students take on a geography/New College course helping preserve the world’s most biodiverse ecosystem and improve quality of life for villagers while learning about the role of culture in environmental sustainability.
floods because there are fewer trees intercepting rain, Steinberg says. "It can also lead to more dramatic flash floods along the river and coral reefs in the Caribbean Sea.

"Erosion makes the banks unstable, so the river gets silted in, which can make it more shallow and muddy," Steinberg says. "It can also lead to more dramatic flash floods because there are fewer trees intercepting rainfalls. These flash floods can lead to further erosion and, in some cases, they can destroy bridges downstream." Erosion also affects the water table, which can impact villagers' wells.

TIDE works to educate individuals who ignore the law about why clearing trees is bad for their villages. It also organizes volunteer groups to replant trees. "By reforesting along riverbanks, you are increasing water quality both in the river and farther downstream as far as the coral reefs," says Caroline Oliver, a TIDE expedition manager who oversaw the UA students' project. "Tree planting really is one of those activities that has a ridge-to-reef benefit."

When water-borne sediments settle onto corals, they decrease respiration and available sunlight, effectively smothering the corals. Students planted mango, sapote, soursop and breadfruit trees. In addition to helping prevent erosion, these trees will be a food source for villagers.

The class also helped park rangers in Paynes Creek National Park clear and maintain trails. This project increased recreation opportunities for locals and tourists and made patrolling trails easier for rangers. Students used machetes to clear the trails. Kristen Marrapodi, a freshman from Skillman, N.J., majoring in metallurgical engineering, says she was a little intimidat-ed by the machetes at first, but the park rangers helped her and the other students learn how to use them.

"I was really impressed by the technique and skill level that they had," she says. "It's a lot of hard work."

During the second part of the trip, students collected data about seagrass around South Water Caye, an island inside South Water Caye Marine Reserve, Belize's biggest marine preservation area.

Students snorkeled nearly every day to gather data near the Belize Barrier Reef, the largest coral reef in the Northern hemisphere and a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage Site. Coral reefs are among the most biodiverse ecosystems on the planet, and seagrass plays a vital role in sustaining the entire coastal environment.

Seagrass beds provide a feeding ground and reproduction habitat for countless marine species, act as sediment filters and protect people and cities from storm surges by serving as breakwaters, says Brad Bates, a geography graduate student and teaching assistant for the course.

To monitor coral reefs and seagrass beds, satellites take pictures of coastal areas. The data students gather is called "ground-truth data" because it's taken off the ground to verify that dark spots that look like seagrass in satellite images actually are. Bates and the other students dove into the water with GPS units and cameras to conduct their work. Bates is writing his thesis on the health of the seagrass in the marine reserve.

Because seagrass has such an immense impact on the environment and marine life in Belize, it has a similar impact on Belize's economy as well.

The country's economy is driven by marine tourism, which accounts for almost a third of total employment in Belize, according to the 2011 National Sustainable Tourism Master Plan of Belize, and for more than a third of the country's gross domestic product, per the World Travel and Tourism Council's 2012 report.

Bates plans to present his research to the Belizean government in an effort to heighten conservation efforts. Preliminary data and mapping suggest major and moderate seagrass degeneration in some areas during the past few years. "It takes a really long time for seagrass to pioneer," Bates says. "It takes about seven years to regrow depending on the species, so it's important to make the investment to figure out why we are seeing changes."

Each year, students also build artificial reef from dead coral rubble and cinder blocks. The activity shows them how quickly certain species colonize a new habitat, Steinberg says. He says the project has become a competition to see if the current class can out-build the previous one.

As part of the GY 450/NEW 450 course, each student keeps a daily natural history journal over the course of the trip. "This is an old fashioned sort of exercise where students record, describe and sometimes draw things they see," Steinberg says. "For example, they need to use field guides to learn the different species of fish and birds that they see. Students learn more by actually drawing and describing the species."

Students also complete reading assignments and attend lectures on coral ecology and the reef ecosystem. "The class holds nightly discussions focused on readings, the students' journals and the day's activities. Students prepare short reflection papers based on the readings and their questions. "The class provided an in-depth understanding of the role of local culture in sustainable conservation," Marrapodi says. "As an engineering major, this is a very relevant topic because future engineers will be responsible for designing systems that are efficient, yet protect the environment and preserve natural resources."

For more information about GY 450/NEW 450 Conservation Field Studies in Belize, contact Dr. Michael K. Steinberg at 205-348-0349 or mksteinberg@ua.edu.
The Best in BUSINESS

Students in UA’s Business Honors Program gain real-world experience by helping nonprofits improve operations and complete projects.

BY MARY SHANNON WELLS | PHOTOS BY DYSEN NEEB AND KRISTEN WALLACE

The University of Alabama Culverhouse College of Commerce ranks among the top business schools in the nation each year, and the students of the Business Honors Program are some of its most impressive representatives.

In addition to mastering advanced curriculum, the 35 students admitted annually to the highly competitive program volunteer with businesses and nonprofit organizations during their junior and senior years. The program draws students from all business majors, including accounting, marketing, management, finance and economics. Through the GBA 481 Business Honors I & IV course, students work in groups of four to eight to assist their clients in improving operations and carrying out projects. They are required to dedicate at least one hour per week to their community partners, and most students work many more hours, says David Ford, director of the Business Honors Program and co-instructor of GBA 481. Each year, students in the program contribute approximately 1,500 volunteer hours to Tuscaloosa-area organizations.

Depending on their clients’ needs, BHP students complete a range of projects, from creating websites and developing marketing materials to assisting with budget research. Nonprofit organizations benefit from students’ knowledge and manpower, and students put their skills to use while exploring fields of interest.

“BHP has been a wonderful opportunity to network for my future career, gain hands-on experience through project work and make a difference in the Tuscaloosa community,” says Cameron Hudson, a senior from Lebanon, Ind., majoring in finance.

In Fall 2016, students in the Business Honors Program worked with nonprofits including Junior Achievement of Tuscaloosa, Forza Financial, Culverhouse LIFT and the Tuscaloosa Parks and Recreation Authority.

Junior Achievement of Tuscaloosa

Hudson’s group worked with Junior Achievement of Tuscaloosa, which teaches kindergarten through 12th graders about financial literacy, entrepreneurship and workforce readiness. Business Honors students who work with Junior Achievement serve as classroom volunteers, leading kids through five lessons using the nonprofit’s teaching kits. During Fall 2016, BHP students also helped amp up Junior Achievement’s social media presence and recruit additional volunteers for the organization needed to cover more than 400 classes.

The Business Honors Program’s ongoing partnership with Junior Achievement began three years ago.

“The reason that I love Business Honors is because that group of students—they’re self-starters; they’re dependable,” says Carla Harris, senior program manager with Junior Achievement of Tuscaloosa.

Tuscaloosa Parks and Recreation Authority

Students revamped the Tuscaloosa Parks and Recreation Authority’s website and social media platforms, built a media package for the organization and worked with the PARA Foundation to raise awareness and funding for an adaptive playground. The playground will be the largest in the Southeast to serve people of all ages and abilities.

Gabbi Oppenheimer, a junior from Chicago triple-majoring in finance, economics and telecommunications and film, worked with the PARA Foundation to organize numerous fundraising initiatives, including a golf tournament.

“I am interested in a career in finance, and helping a municipal entity raise money to improve the community is helpful in providing perspective to a different side of finance,” Oppenheimer says.

Forza Financial

A nonprofit founded by UA students in 2009, Forza Financial offers small loans and business coaching to Alabama entrepreneurs with little capital who are trying to start or grow a business. These business owners sometimes turn to payday lenders, which typically charge triple-digit annual interest along with finance fees. Through Forza, students provide uncollateralized loans, competitive interest rates and consulting using group lending.

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In Fall 2016, BHP students working with Forza researched a tracking program for loans and assisted with fundraising events.

Culverhouse LIFT

Culverhouse LIFT (Learning Initiative and Financial Training), founded by a UA accounting instructor and a UA business graduate student in 2014, teaches basic computer, financial-literacy, resume-writing and professional-development classes in the Tuscaloosa area with a goal of helping under-represented and disadvantaged groups start or enhance their careers. BHP students teach many of these classes and launched a career fair for LIFT participants.

McKinney says BHP students have been an integral component of LIFT since it began. “They’re extremely independent, and they’re not scared of this challenge,” McKinney says. “They’re not scared of the uncertainty of it.”

During the Fall 2016 semester, BHP students also developed a report for the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce on the socio-economic impact of nonprofits on the community. “It takes a lot of diplomatic skills, social skills, managerial and leadership skills,” Ford says of the students’ work. “And I’m hoping that they learn these things and see the value of all that from the two years they spend volunteering.”

In each class week, GBA 481 students learn from a variety of guest speakers representing companies such as Southwest Airlines and Regions Bank. Students also turn in weekly reports detailing their work with their community partners and explaining their project goals for the next week. They complete a mid-year project report and a final project report as well. The final report is delivered as a business presentation.

Oppenheimer says she appreciates the diverse perspectives she has been exposed to through GBA 481. “I’ve had the opportunity to work with and learn from people from all disciplines within the business school,” she says, “and each person has brought something new and unique to our group.”

For more information about GBA 481 and the Business Honors Program, contact David Ford at 205-348-4631 or dford@cba.ua.edu or Dr. David Heggem at 205-348-4537 or dheggem@culverhouse.ua.edu.

Members of the Spring 2017 GBA 481 class
Faculty Fellows in Service Learning Program

One-year fellowship provides service-learning training and support to faculty members.

BY MARY SHANNON WELLS

launched in 2007, the Faculty Fellows in Service Learning Program is The University of Alabama’s campus-wide initiative dedicated to helping faculty develop and implement service-learning courses. The program includes a series of workshops and has become a source of inspiration for academic innovators.

Approximately 12 faculty members per year participate in the Faculty Fellows in Service Learning Program, which now has 98 alumni members.

Dr. Andrea Cevasco-Trotter, a 2015-2016 Faculty Fellow and associate professor of music therapy, says that workshops helped her add depth to service learning within UA’s music-therapy program, which has included service-learning components since it began in the 1980s.

“I enjoyed collaborating and sharing ideas with other faculty,” Cevasco-Trotter says. “For me, personally, it was intellectually stimulating.”

Dr. Katrina Ramonell, a 2015-2016 Faculty Fellow and associate professor in biological sciences, used her service-learning training to create a new aspect of her BSC 422/522 Biology of Cancer course. Students now collect and analyze water samples from a river that serves as a drinking-water source for Alabama residents and relate their findings to particular types of cancer.

“I definitely think it is beneficial for my students," Ramonell says. “They really enjoy it, and it gives a real-life aspect to a subject that was more based in a textbook before.”

Ramonell says the Faculty Fellows in Service Learning Program offers an excellent pathway for the University as a whole to get involved in the broader community.

The Faculty Fellows in Service Learning Program has increased course opportunities for students, produced partnerships between the University and communities throughout Alabama and the world and helped make service learning a vital component of The University of Alabama experience.

During the past two academic years, Faculty Fellows have developed the following courses:

Melanie Acosta Assistant Professor, Curriculum & Instruction

Developing Reading in Elementary Schools creates transformative learning experiences for undergraduate pre-service teachers through service learning that cultivates a sense of moral responsibility as part of their teaching habits. Students work in a community-based after-school program to challenge their existing perceptions about reading achievement and their roles as reading teachers. They also gain in-depth knowledge of ways to promote the interests of underserved communities through effective literacy teaching.

Leigh Booth

Associate Professor, Music Therapy

MUS 382 Music Therapy Practicum provides music-therapy students supervised experience in facilitating music-therapy sessions in community-agency settings. Students' roles encompass assessment, program planning, implementation, documentation and evaluation of music-therapy services. Students work closely with community organizations to provide services that enhance the mission statements of the organizations and process feedback regarding the outcomes of their services.

Chandra Clark

Assistant Professor, New College

NEW 243 Interdisciplinary Science is based on scientific exploration through reading assignments and class discussions as well as on interactive, field-based scientific activities. Students engage in independent water-quality monitoring of the Black Warrior River throughout the semester. They gather, organize, and analyze findings and share them through the Scientific American Citizen Science program and local advocacy groups such as Black Warrior Riverkeepers.

Mary Louanne Friend, Associate Professor, Capstone College of Nursing

NUR 517 Graduate Independent Study offers students in the Capstone College of Nursing a chance to apply skills learned in the classroom during medi-cal service-learning abroad experiences. The course focuses on reflection and pre-service teaching to prepare students to serve communities abroad. Students participate in an immersive learning program in which they live and provide health care in a culture different from their own. Association among poverty, community resources and citizen's health are central to the learning experience.

One-year fellowship provides service-learning training and support to faculty members.

BY MARY SHANNON WELLS
practice, including values and ethics, roles and responsibilities, communi-
cation and teamwork. Students serve together in critical-care
clinics, the Transitions of Care Clinic at University Medical Center. The clinic,
established by an inter-professional team, was developed with a goal of decreasing hospital readmissions for patients who have chronic conditions and face medical or social issues in the transition from hospital to home.

Memorie Gosa
Assistant Professor, Communicative Disorders

CD 275 Anatomy & Physiology of the Speech and Hearing Mechanism pro-
vides undergraduate research, while offering students an in-depth look at specific diagnoses and the speech, lan-
guage, hearing and swallowing conse-
quences of those diagnoses. Through the quality-enhancement initiatives of The University of Alabama’s Speech and Hearing Center, students par-
ticipate in a retrospective, descriptive analysis to understand the speech, lan-
guage, hearing and swallowing needs of individuals served by this West Ala-
Bama clinic. Their research assists the center in better serving these patients.

Xabier Granja
Instructor, Modern Languages & Classics

SP 356 Advanced Grammar & Com-
position helps students improve their Spanish-language skills via traditional activities and bilingual translation for community nonprofits. Students translate texts for: Druid City Garden Project, an educational-outreach pro-
gram that brings gardening to elemen-
tary schools; Good Samaritan Clinic, a medical clinic serving low-income individuals and families; and Turning Point, a nonprofit that combats do-
mestic abuse in West Alabama. These translated texts range from educational materials and patient-information forms to brochures for victims of do-
mestic violence, helping ensure Span-
ish-speaking community members have access to information and services from nonprofits.

Brownen Lichtenstein
Professor, Criminal Justice

SOC 471 Medical Sociology: Health Care Disparity, Poverty and Social Just-
tice addresses patterns of health and illness in modern society. The course covers three fundamental points: how society shapes individual understand-
ings of what it means to be healthy, how people behave when they are ill and how society produces different patterns of health and illness. Students volunteer with FocusFirst to conduct vision screenings for children at child-
care centers in low-income areas.

Christopher Lynn
Assistant Professor, Anthropology

ANT 450 Anthropology is Elemental: Teaching Anthropology in Primary and Secondary Settings introduces college students to applied anthropology by giving them the opportunity to design and teach curriculum to elementary- and middle-school students. As part of partnerships between The University of Alabama and Tuscaloosa Magnet Schools – Elementary and Middle and Arcadia Elementary, Anthropology is Elemental trains graduate and under-
graduate students while providing a service to the Tuscaloosa community.

Lori Lynn
Assistant Professor, Capstone College of Nursing

NUR 324 Fundamentals of Professional Nursing Practice is an introductory clin-
ical nursing course in which students serve in a long-term care facility with a focus on meeting an agency-identified need. While doing so, students de-
velop communication skills, practice working with vulnerable populations and engage in culturally sensitive care across all ages.

David Meek
Instructor, Anthropology

NEW 413 Politics of Food Sovereignty

s Society helps students better under-
stand the opportunities and constraints involved in practicing sustainable ag-
riculture. Students participate in four interrelated ser-
vice-learning projects. These include:

helping a heirloom seed bank digitally categorize its inventory; conducting a survey of Tuscaloosa-area gardeners and farmers concerning their interest in saving seeds; learning about sustain-
able agriculture while working with area farmers; and helping organize the West Alabama Seed Swap.

John Myrick
Clinical Instructor, Special Education & Multiple Abilities

NPE 802 New Enthusiast in Special Education Accommodation Strategies partners students with the Tuscaloosa Park and Recreation Authority’s physical-therapy department, which gives individu-
als with various disabilities the chance to be involved in competitive sporting events, exercise and community activi-
ties. Students help facilitate events and activities, providing everyone involved with opportunities for social interac-
tion while exposing UA students to in-
dividuals with disabilities in a broader community setting.

Katrina Ramonell
Associate Professor, Biological Sciences

BSC 422/522 Biology of Cancer intro-
troduces students to the biological principals that explain the origins, de-
velopment, pathology and treatment of cancer. Students work in teams to investigate particular types of cancer. They collect data on national, state and county cancer rates and forms for the Tuscaloosa Environmental Digital (TED) website. The class also partners with Black Warrior Riverkeeper to col-
lect and analyze water samples from companies that discharge materials into the river. Students present data regarding chemicals/toxins present in the samples to the Black Warrior River-
keeper and relate the data to their as-
signed cancers.

Wei Song
Assistant Professor, Civil Engineering

CE 434 Structural Steel Design I in-
troduces students to the basic plan design for community houses and associated controlling factors, in-
cluding safety requirements, cost estimation and local housing policy impact. This course enables students to analyze, synthesize and think crit-
ically about various design strategies that can influence decision-making regarding house plans. Through the service-learning component of the course, students work with Habitat for Humanity of Tuscaloosa to ad-
dress housing needs.

Lesley Jo Weaver
Assistant Professor, Anthropology

ANT 450 Anthropology, Psychology & Mental Health helps students learn
about mental health through vol-
unteering at two residential mental healthcare facilities in Tuscaloosa – one catering to a wealthy popula-
tion and the other serving a poorer population. The course provides manpower to those institutions and outside interaction to socially iso-
lated patients while giving students a firsthand look into how mental health and healthcare are socially influenced.

Monika Wedgeworth
Assistant Professor, Capstone College of Nursing

NUR 374 Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing focuses on skills such as ther-
apeutic communication in mental health, inter-professional collaboration, outcome evaluation and the application of evidence-based practice models. During a service-learning experience with a clinical partner, students offer interactive learning opportunities to adults with developmental disabilities. Activities focus on essential life skills such as infection control, hygiene and healthy food choices. Students evaluate outcomes through reflective journals.

STEPHENV. BLACK
DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR ETHICS & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Stephen Foster Black has di-
rected the UA Center for Ethics & Social Responsibili-
ty since the Center’s founding in 2005. Grandson of U.S. Supreme
Court Justice Black, Stephen also is founder and president of Impact Alabama: A Student Service Initiative, the state’s first nonprofit organization dedicated to devel-
oping and implementing substantive service-learning projects in coordination with colleges and universities throughout Alabama. In October 2014, Impact Alabama became Impact America, which currently operates in Ala-
Bama, Tennessee, South Carolina and Florida.

Black earned a bachelor’s degree from The University of Pennsylvania in 1993 before attending Yale Law School, where he graduated in 1997. After three years in private practice, he spent a year as an assistant to the governor of Alabama, researching policy issues and working on eco-
nomic development projects. In 2008, Black was named one of 10 recipients – out of more than 800 nominations na-
tionwide – for the Robert Wood Johnson Foun-
dation Community Health Leaders Award for creating the FocusFirst vision screening initiative. Contact Black at stephen.black@ua.edu.

TERI K. HENLEY
FACULTY FELLOWS IN SERVICE-LEARNING COORDINATOR

Tieri Henley has more than 30 years’ experience in the aca-
ademic and nonprofit commu-
nications field. During her academic career, Henley
has provided her students the opportunity to be involved in course-relevant, “real-life”
learning, from giving them the opportu-
nity to instill in them an ethic of service and a lifetime commitment to civic participation.

She is adviser for The Capstone Agency, a student-
run organization that has implemented numerous award-winning campaigns. Since joining The Univer-
sity of Alabama faculty in 2007, she has worked with more than 50 community partners on service-learning activities. Previously, Henley spent 15 years at Loyola University New Orleans, where she was associate pro-
fessor and chair of the Communications Department and director of the Shawn M. Donnelly Center for Nonprofit Communications.

Her work through the Center gave her the opportu-
nity to supervise more than 300 projects for nonprofit clients. She is author of 21 articles and three book chap-
ters. She is also a member of the field of nonprofit communications, which is in her research and teaching passion. Contact Henley at henley@apr.ua.edu.
The University of Alabama’s Service-Learning magazine is published by the Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility, a division of the Office of Academic Affairs.

UA STUDENTS WHO EARNED SERVICE-LEARNING CREDIT OR VOLUNTEER HOURS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS ISSUE OF THE SERVICE-LEARNING MAGAZINE: (Center) Jamie Moon; (Left to right) Dysen Neeb, Mary Shannon Wells, Dylan Walker, Mary Grace Roden and Kristen Wallace.

Not pictured: Olivia Boswell, Kelsey Daugherty, Ellen Johnson, Allie Newman, Harish Rao, Jessi Simmons, Lane Stafford, Madalynn Young and Sutang Zhang

For more information about service-learning opportunities at The University of Alabama, visit cesr.ua.edu or slpro.ua.edu.

UA student Caylee O’Connor participates in a Day of Service event through the 57 Miles Perry County Partnership (page 40).